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THE KEY OF THE FORTN.

THE KEY OF THE FORTH;

OR,

HISTORICAL SKETCHES

OF THE

ISLAND OF MAY.

INTERSPERSED WITH A VARIETY OF CURIOUS SCENES
ON THE EAST COAST OF FIFE.

BY

JOHN JACK,

AUTHOR OF THE "HISTORY OF ST MONANCE."

EDINBURGH: W. P. NIMMO.

CUPAR-FIFE: WHITEHEAD & ORR.

AND ALL BOOKSELLERS.

1858.

THE KEY OF THE FORT

HISTORICAL SKETCHES

OF THE

ISLAND OF MAY

INTERFERED WITH A VARIETY OF OTHER WORKS
ON THE EAST COAST OF AFRICA

BY

JOHN JACK,

COMMANDER OF THE "HOBART" OF H.M.S.

WHITEHEAD AND ORR, PRINTERS, CUPAR-FIFE.

EDINBURGH: W. & F. R. SMITH

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P R E F A C E.

IN the spacious theatre of rational existence, the ever-varying drama of life, with all its gorgeous scenery, appears teeming with incessant revolution, interspersed with alternate sunshine and shade, and chequered, in all its exhibitions, with interminable vicissitude. The favourite pursuits that engross the attention, engage the affections, and incite all the faculties of the busy actors on the whirling stage, are as diversified in their nature and character as are the dispositions, inclinations, and predilections that rule in the intellectual empire; and each pursuit, however trivial or important, rational or romantic, is actuated by a peculiar impulse, governed by a distinctive aim, and consummated in a definite purpose. Nor is the sphere of action, the arena of human enterprise, restricted to the narrow limits of man's visual horizon, or circumscribed within the precincts of an island, an ocean, or a continent, but comprehends the immeasurable

creation, the boundless universe of visible being ; and every object existing within that fathomless range, whether rational or sensitive, animate or inanimate, is rendered subservient to the aims, ends, and purposes of human ingenuity. The geologist relinquishes the contemplation of the present and the dubious uncertainty of the future, and descending into the cloud-wrapt gloom of antiquity, scans the fragments of creation, from the pebbles on the sea-shore to the latent fossils secreted in the bowels of the earth. Impelled by the inquisitive principle that reigns inherent in the bosom of man, and was first developed in the blessed retreats of innocence, he wades through the ravelled mazes of perplexing research, till he attains the consummation of his enterprise, a scientific basis whereon he erects a complacent belief that the globe which he inhabits revolved for countless centuries antecedent to its date in the annals of history, sacred or profane. The soaring astronomer, losing sight of the dark terrestrial sphere, travels in vision through the azure void, surveys the boundless fields of infinitude, wends his pathless way through a labyrinth of worlds, and holds familiar intercourse with the gorgeous equipage that crowds the amphitheatre of heaven ; and having indulged to satiety his high-toned intellectual appetite, he descends in triumph through the dazzling splendours of the

galaxy, the fanciful pathway of the gods, and discloses to the wondering world the glorious feats achieved by his ethereal expedition, and disseminates over the benighted empire of man a luminous blaze from the orb of science. The intelligent geographer, inspired with a spirit of ardent intrepidity, and governed by an innate principle of inquiring curiosity, forsakes the peaceful home of his nativity, the social interchanges of friendly intercourse, and all the attractive charms that indulge the cultivated fancy in a land of civilisation ; and inflated with the prospect of discovering rivers and regions remote, that never loomed on his vision, and only appear in faint outlines, portrayed by the random pencil of imagination, he braves the perils of tempestuous elements, traverses interminable oceans, endures the scorching influence of a vertical sun, and the inclement sterility of the frigid blast that paves the polar sea. Exposed to the toils, the perils, and privations of pedestrian existence, he explores the wilds of uncultured nature, ransacks the barbarous retreats of savage irrationals, and rational savages, where the relentless cannibal, more ferocious than the beasts of prey, devours his kindred flesh ; and, if he falls not a victim to his temerity in the midst of his enterprise, discloses secrets pregnant with important advantages to the commercial world, and adds a brilliant

star to the scientific constellation that illumines the literary horizon of civilised Europe. The indefatigable historian gropes his dubious way through the mystified avenues of oblivious obscurity, rakes up the ashes of vanished generations, pores over the tattered, half-obliterated records of antiquity, baffling the power of vision to perceive and modern ingenuity to decipher, and scans with unrelaxing perseverance the moss-covered sculpture that faintly wrestles with conquering time amid the mouldering ruins of architecture; and, like the fastidious florist, culling a garland from every accessible parterre, or the industrious bee, extracting the sweets from every blooming feature of the vegetable creation, he, having exhausted every visible and tangible source of information, resorts to the muddy fountain of tradition that flows through a thousand devious channels to fill up the blank in his intellectual grasp. With acute ear, untiring attention, and intense interest, he listens to the stifled accents that hang on the faltering tongue and time-worn vocables of garulous age; while the shattered remnant of vigorous humanity, bowing beneath the pressure of years and decrepitude, communicates with peculiar delight the unwritten history of memorable events, transmitted through the dark vista of entombed ages, suspended on the treacherous hook of human recollection, and subject to the

ceaseless vicissitude of unnumbered generations. Hence the prying inquirer is enabled to follow his favourite pursuit into the bewildering mist of elapsed time, far beyond the province of record ; and numerous incidents are consequently prevented from descending into the impervious gloom of utter oblivion.

The muse-inspired poet, governed by the prepossessions of fancy, celebrates, in glowing strains of lofty eloquence and exalted figures of imagery, landscapes distinguished for their boldness and picturesque scenery, mountains, rivers, and lakes fancied in the tales of superstitious antiquity, as the dreaded, blood-freezing haunts of supernatural beings ; or, under a different impulse of imagination, celebrates, in flowing strains of sentimental harmony, the fields of sanguinary conflict, the glorious achievements of arms, and the dauntless hero whose intrepid prowess earned the laurels of victory. Cessation from the various vocations of life must be occupied either by intellectual pursuits, physical recreation, or mere animal indulgence ; the fleeting moments of time must, by every man, be devoted to some peculiar occupation, though it were but killing flies, in imitation of ancient royalty.

The Author of the following treatise, comprehending historical sketches and tales connected with the Island of May, has selected this peculiar

subject of research under the influence of a complicated impulse, deriving its powers of action from a combination of internal prepossessions, as well as external circumstances. An irresistible predilection for the curious traditions of antiquity, the interesting events, the mysterious incidents, the remarkable exhibitions of a diversified character, that have been enacted in connection with the history of the island, and a predominant desire to preserve such from ultimately descending into the rayless dungeon of utter forgetfulness, constitute the main-spring of his protracted exertions on the present occasion. This isolated object, both previous and subsequent to its artificial illumination, has, from the earliest ages of maritime commerce, been the scene of countless appalling shipwrecks and dreadful sacrifice of human life. It points out the inlet of the German Ocean, by means of which is afforded a valuable facility to the commercial operations of Scotland, as it opens up a communication with a large and populous theatre of agricultural and mercantile enterprise. The reader will at once perceive something of an entirely novel character in the arrangement of these historical remarks. Historical works uniformly commence at some remote period of obscure antiquity, and gradually descend from the past to the present, as the stream that proceeds from the mountain meanders down the declivity

till its waters expand and incorporate with their parent ocean.

Whereas, in the subjoined narration of events, the Author, being unable to perceive, amid the confused jungle of traditionary incidents, a clear and distinct epoch in the wide waste of vanished ages, where he might with certainty fix the starting point of his adventure, commences by detailing the circumstances that exhibit themselves in the sunshine of the visible present, and by retrospective research prosecutes his expedition, in a converse direction, into the tenebrious gloom that envelopes the past. And having, with considerable labour and persevering inquiry, extracted from the ever-varying volume of tradition a vast variety of notable events, both of a vicious and virtuous, a comic and tragic character, and arranged them in separate chapters, according to the era which gave them existence, he now most respectfully submits the chequered volume to the diversified taste of a discerning public. Though some of the chapters may appear to have no affinity whatever with the subject proposed, they are either prefatory reflections or digressive allusions, expressly designed to introduce to the intelligent reader the diversified scenes enacted in the days of innocent simplicity and feudal barbarism; others, from the circumstances therein narrated, may much more resemble

a history of the East Coast of Fife, and the most memorable events that occurred there in the remote ages of antiquity, than of the Island of May ; but all are selected and introduced with a distinct reference to the subject, and either have their origin, or ultimatum, in singular transactions, feats, and achievements exhibited on, or in intimate connection with, that notable islet, as the attentive reader, by connecting the apparently detached links, will eventually discover.

The tempests that cloud the horizon around,
In howling convulsions, may menace the towers ;
The proud heaving billows in tumults may bound,
And nature exhaust her insensible powers ;
The actors that figure on time's moral stage
Gay prospects may shroud in a mantle of gloom ;
Vile passions envenomed like ocean may rage,
And thousands untimely convey to the tomb ;

Despite the unprincipled jarring and strife
Of tyrant ambition, that empires annoy,
And the boisterous tumults of powers without life,
That oft the fair scenery of nature destroy—
The Key of the Forth, on its basis secure,
'Mid the deep-rolling flood still unshaken remains,
Dispenses hope's beams through the night-shade obscure,
And the soul of the sea-beaten sailor sustains.

THE KEY OF THE FORTH ;

OR,

HISTORICAL SKETCHES OF THE ISLAND OF MAY.

CHAPTER I.

MAN's position, as he whirls amid the changeful scenery of life's tumultuous theatre, is but that of a bewildered traveller in a trackless wild, enveloped in a haze impervious to his unaided perception ; the past and the future appear equally involved in a deep veil of unchequered obscurity, through which he essays in vain to thrust his eager, enquiring eyes. Upon his own little eminence, by fancy created, he erects a gorgeous tower of self-importance ; and exalting himself on its loftiest pinnacle, he can survey the circumjacent landscape drawn by the pencil of nature, and render its diversified features familiar to his observation. But his ocular dominion, like the furious billows of the ocean, admits a restraining limit, and the entire world appears circumscribed within the narrow compass of his visual horizon. And were stern impossibility to relinquish for an instant the absolute dominion which it holds in the province of mortals, and permit this self-exalted being, by one miraculous effort, to overbound the extreme precincts of this contracted circumference for ought within the

range of his intuitive ken, he might plunge headlong into a boiling ocean ; a blissful elysium ; or a dismal void, a fathomless abyss of rayless night. Sated with the prospect beneath, he lifts his aspiring head and heaves his glistening eyes into the vast, stupendous concave that capes alike the snow-clad mountain and the mole-hill, and forms a splendid canopy for the lofty prince arrayed in all the splendours of his dazzling panoply, as well as for the humble peasant attired in his simple habiliments. Here, with gazing wonder, he surveys the magnificent azure-vaulted arena where the radiant, life-inspiring sovereign of day beams and burns in glorious effulgence. Here he wanders, as it were, with mingling familiarity amongst the countless worlds that roam in harmonious confusion through the boundless fields of ether, till the powers of his finite vision, inadequate to the vastness of the prospect, become absorbed in the soul-bewildering distance, overwhelmed in sublime amazement, and engulfed in the regions of infinitude. And the ultimatum of all his discovery merely induces the simple conclusion, that, however exalted his position in the scale of rational existence, he is still the identical traveller, warpt in the toils of enchantment, immured and bewildered in the bosom of a cloud, groping his dubious way through a maze of uncertainty, a pathless fairyland, teeming with illusive phantoms, deceptive pit-falls, and invisible precipices. The weary, wayfaring wight, whom the evening twilight has summoned to some convenient caravansary to repose for the night and recruit exhausted nature, may, by an effort of memory, retrace every step of his pilgrimage up to the point of his departure, and distinctly perceive reflected in the mirror of fancy every object of attraction or repulsion that in his devious wanderings has arrested his attention. Here, in naked sterility, extends the barren waste,

unblest by the winding rivulet, the shady umbrage, or diversifying oasis ; and there, the verdant lawn, arranged in all its charms, uncursed by the sterile breath of the desert, the lava of the bursting volcano, or blighting influence of the death-disseminating upas. Here, the scented grove, whose balmy fragrance, wafted on the breeze, perfumes the ambient atmosphere ; and there, the bending forest, mantled in deep luxuriant foliage, shadowing the princely dome of modern architecture that glitters in gorgeous magnificence, or wrapping in sombre obscurity yon hallowed fane, the mouldering monument of antiquity. Thus borne, as it were, on the fleet pinions of vision, he measures back the rugged path through the scenes he has distanced ; whilst his jaded limbs, extended on the pallet of repose, enjoy the blest indulgence of suspended action. The reminiscient faculties of the soul often in like manner recal events which the silent wheels of time have hurled down the dark avenue of the past, and consigned to oblivion's concealment. And whilst these loom in glimmering retrospect on the mental vision, like distant objects on the external sense, they excite a burst of feelings responding in quality to the respective character of the events by which they are produced. So powerful, so irresistible, is the influence which certain reminiscences exercise over the mind, that the various internal operations appear vividly depicted in the peculiar alternations of the external index. As the soul, having receded through the dark postern of elapsed time, rummages amongst the motley lumber of events long proscribed, the eye frequently assumes a vivid lustre, and brightens up into sparkling radiance ; whilst a mantling smile suffuses itself over the entire visage, expressive of some pleasing emotion gliding secretly through the avenues of the heart. Again—as the mysterious changes occurrent in the regions of the

atmosphere effect a manifest change in the aspect of the barometer, so does the transition from one theme of contemplation to another as perceptibly discover itself by its own legitimate symptoms unconsciously exhibited. Accordingly, by a reflex influence exerted on the soul, the eye that erewhile beamed with apparent delight falls dead and motionless on some fixed object, unadorned by the charms of variety to which it seems riveted, like a felon to his block. The smile of complaisance vanishes like a transient glimpse of the winter sun, and gives place to a lowring gloom, a frowning shade, a scowling tempest, that overshadow every feature and usurp dominion over the entire countenance—thus indicating an unpleasant, a heart-chilling reminiscence, from which the being instinctively recoils, as if he realised a resuscitation of those repugnant scenes whose grizzly images, staring through the mist of recollection, disquiet his soul, like the grinning ghosts of the murdered that haunt the blood-stained assassin. The constitution of man involves in it certain inquisitive elements, which, like the turbulent waters of the great Atlantic, seldom enjoy pacific slumber, except in a temporary suspension of the watchful senses. What? or Why? in silent or audible interrogatory, incessantly occupies a prominent status in the sphere of rational existence; and, though frequently destined to endure the withering chill of disappointment in the solution of the queries, still continues the prying process with unabated ardour. This searching principle of enquiry, which appeared more peculiarly conspicuous amongst the ancient Athenians than in any other nation under the canopy of heaven, still continues to be more predominant in some characters than in others. And it assumes an infinite variety of shapes, colours, and qualities, according to the various gradations of intellect over which it exerts its influence—all, however, deriving

from their several pursuits a certain quantum of gratification or disappointment, in exact proportion to the respective qualities, tendencies, and capacities of the mind. The grovelling wretch, whose supreme delight is to wallow in the filth of slander, exerts all his enquiring faculties in sifting out every flaw in the character of his neighbour, and enjoys a fiendish satisfaction if successful in casting a shade on his moral reputation. The despicable caves-dropper summons into active operation all his physical organs and mental energies in tracing out the private transactions of all within the range of his observation; and should he fail in ascertaining what was the profit or loss of Mr Dauntless's late speculation, or when he is to be wed to Miss Virtue, and what is her portion, an agonizing sting of disappointment, like a poisoned arrow, festers in his soul and embitters his entire existence—for every successive dawn introduces similar teasing topics of fruitless and unprofitable enquiry. Contrasted with those detestable shadows of humanity, behold the profound theologian, the man of splendid genius and exalted intellect, tracing the origin of evil. He scans the dark labyrinth of vice in all its mazy windings, through the waste of vanished ages up to the garden of Eden. When coming in contact with an insurmountable barrier, he attempts to overcome it by the insoluble question, Why should vice, so hideous in its form, odious in its nature, and pernicious in its consequences, claim its origin in the regions of immaculate purity? Behold, too, the soaring astronomer, erudite in nature's most exalted lore, and apparently abstracted from the dingy planet he inhabits. Borne on the pinions of science, he ascends the steep ethereal, traverses the pathless glories of the azure firmament, and affines himself with the celestial orbs, the gorgeous theme of his lofty contemplation; and having attained to a self-pleas-

ing solution of sundry abstruse queries connected with the distances, motions, and magnitudes of those brilliant objects that bestud the vault of heaven, and which, to the bulk of the nether world, still lie mantled in midnight obscurity—the inquisitive principle, insatiate in its thirst for discovery, still whispers its resistless insinuations, and goads him on to a climax of enquiry more perplexing than ever, what sort of beings people those distant worlds, and what are the pursuits in which they engage? create in the mental region an unfordable river, an impervious cloud, an inaccessible mountain.

This prying propensity, though to a certain extent existing in all, operates very differently on the subjects of its empire, according to their complexion, inherent disposition, and natural temperament. The conquests achieved through its medium, produce in some a thrilling sensation of placid delight and silent self-gratulation; whilst in others they excite a gust of extatic rapture and frantic transport verging on delirium. This peculiar result is said to have been exemplified in the case of an ancient mathematician, who maintained an arduous and unsuccessful conflict with a stubborn problem, until he had wasted the fire of his ingenuity, expended the powers of calculation, and exhausted the reasoning faculties of his soul. At length the solution flashed like a blaze of lightning on his bewildered mind, aroused the dormant energies of his physical system, and produced such a vibration of the locomotive springs, that he rushed into the street, habited in his bed-gown and night-cap, exclaiming, in the voice of frenzy, “I have found it, I have found it!” The defeats which this propensity is frequently and inevitably destined to endure, likewise exhibit themselves in a variety of colours. In some constitutions, they incite to action all the morbid affections that slumber in their latent recesses,

which, converging to one centre, form a virulent combination of discordant elements, subversive of all enjoyment; while the social beings become transformed into figures of aversion whose very aspect seems repulsive, and all who come in contact with them in the ordinary business of life are subjected to a surly scowl, or haply a bursting tempest of wrath, alike unqualified as unaccountable. To this secret cause may be attributed the inhospitable temper which exists in a considerable proportion of those sulky, unapproachable mortals, everywhere prevalent, whose sterile humour converts earth's fairest climes into a wilderness, poisons the springs of human comfort, and mars the beauty of the rational world. In others, possessing lofty, overbearing spirits, a signal defeat of this prying passion is sometimes the grizzly parent of deep mental dejection, which, fostered by a pungent feeling of fancied ignominy, renders the foiled enquirer so utterly regardless even of life itself as to neglect the means of self-preservation; or, by his own fell deed, to break down the brittle partition that separates between the present and future. And on this very principle many of the inexplicable suicides occurrent in this enquiring country may be accounted for. For instance, it is reported of an eminent philosopher of antiquity, to whom the undeviating regularity which prevailed in the flux and reflux of the ocean had long formed a subject of profound admiration, and conceiving that such a beautiful effect must proceed from some natural cause which at that period lay wrapt in mystery, he became locked in the trammels of this prying propensity; and finding no solution to the query, the defeat so affected his brain as to induce a temporary derangement of the reflective faculties, under which aberration of intellect he plunged into the swelling abyss, and perished in the dark subject of his enquiry.

It may, perhaps, be inferred from this conclusion, that only great scientific minds are liable to this fatal extremity. But this inference obviously carries absurdity in its own bosom. For example, the body of every man, whether strong or weak, will sustain only a certain pressure according to its respective capabilities, and more cannot be superadded without committing an outrage on the physical constitution, and deranging the constituents of the marvellous structure; and as disastrous consequences are the evident result of imposing on the corporal edifice a degree of pressure to which its powers of resistance are inadequate, a similar position in respect to the intellectual machinery is equally tenable. Minds, like bodies, are variously constructed, and exhibit an infinite diversity of powers and capacities, tendencies, curves, and inclinations. And as one body, delicate and fragile in its construction, may be as much oppressed beneath a weight of ten stones avoirdupois as another under double the burden—so a weak, puerile mind, only fitted to grapple with trivial enquiries, may be as much bewildered and perplexed by endeavouring to ascertain the cause why the rudder produces such a mighty influence on the motion of a ponderous vessel of such vast dimensions, as another, possessed of more gigantic powers, may be in attempting to account for the variation of the mariner's compass. And both are equally liable to soured existence or fatal disaster, resulting from hapless failure and frustration of purpose, provided the inquisitive principle be sufficiently powerful and equal in both, which is quite a possible case; for it is sometimes known to wield its curious sceptre with as absolute sway over the silly, contemptible eavesdropper, as over the man of science, distinguished for eminent talents and profound research.

In the complex machinery of the mind there may be

certain moving principles of minor impulse, which, having attained the utmost goal of their purpose, may become sated with indulgence, and lapse into a dormant state of suspended action. But this peculiar passion seems to command a sort of indefinite empire ; and the accomplishment of every successive aim merely produces a keener incentive to another, as wave chases wave in the boundless ocean. And although the result of every successful enquiry is naturally accompanied with a pleasing thrill of complacency that vibrates through all the springs of action, the settled glow of satisfaction is still unfelt. Anon, fresh queries are propounded, disquietudes engendered, discoveries effected ; and still an interminable extent of perplexing research unfolds its mystic portals, that ope the dusky avenue into a mystified arena which the latest descendants of Adam and the last sands of Time will leave unexplored.

By surveying the present aspect of the surrounding scenery, and minutely observing the obvious signs of vicissitude in certain conspicuous features, rational inferences may be drawn, and plausible conclusions adopted, respecting the appearance which such presented at a period long since cancelled in the ocean of oblivion ; and by exercising the powers of retrospective vision, scenes long entombed may be summoned from the slumbers of chaos, arrayed in their original vestments, and presented to the mind in all their pristine colours, as distinctly visible as the present objects which crowd incessantly on the external sense. Past circumstances of appalling terror, events fraught with inevitable ruin, scenes involving inextricable peril, and the inconceivable means by which deliverance was effected, may strike with awe and overwhelming gratitude the contemplative soul. But what exalted prospect, what depth of intuitive wisdom, what vigour of prophetic vision possessed by

mortals, can penetrate one contracted span into the dark vista of futurity? Or what prudential foresight, what finite skill or sagacity, can with certainty anticipate the bland smiles, the soft caresses, of fortune; or avert the bleak frowns and calamitous reverses concealed behind the dense cloud that obscures the morrow? 'Tis virtue only, untainted by the one, and unvanquished by the other, that rises superior to both; and with brows encircled with the unfading laurel,

“From her settled orb looks calmly down
On life or death, a prison or a crown.”

CHAPTER II.

THE terraqueous globe, however vast in magnitude, however mysteriously balanced in the boundless void, or however inconceivable its material construction, may be abstractedly considered but one complete creature. The extensive continents, the fathomless oceans, the flood-girt islands, the impetuous rivers, the slumbering lakes, and the towering mountains, being merely the constituent parts of one stupendous edifice, which, being marvellously hinged and connected by enduring sinews, and curiously pervaded by internal veins, canals, and arteries, all its components continually depend upon, nourish, and supply each other—so that through the prodigious accumulation of ages rolled upon ages, the entire mass sustains neither increase nor diminution; and being governed by immutable laws, durable as its Owner's existence, the huge, unwieldy creature still performs its revolutions, exhibiting the same exquisite har-

mony, the same unaltered symmetry of parts, as when its youthful face first glowed in grateful response to the cheering splendours of the infant sun. It must therefore be inferred that every apparent waste, every visible consumption, must be restored by equivalent compensation, otherwise the uniformity of all its members could not long be maintained. Land and sea are the two great constituents of the globe with which man is principally concerned. The former is the great storehouse of sustenance for every species of animate being that moves on its surface; and the latter the grand reservoir whence every stream, every fountain, derives its existence and perpetual supply. The peaceful, soft-flowing rivulets, that wind their devious way in graceful meanders through the fertile meads, or move remote amid the umbrageous gloom of mazy solitude, glide on in their random course with ceaseless motion, wrapt in deep concealment, and unknown by aught except their stilly murmurs falling on the wakeful ear. The gushing floods that burst from the belching crannies of the heaving mountains, and in headlong torrents and roaring cataracts down the declining steep, rush with dread impetuosity, and in their wayward course, uniting a thousand auxiliaries, augmenting the mountain floods to vast navigable rivers, rolling and tumbling and burying their rapid waters in the bosom of their great parent, the ocean—at once their source and confluence. This peculiar system of reciprocity is opined by some (notwithstanding the admitted principle) to be mysteriously conducted by the secret agency of the fore-mentioned veins and arteries that pervade the solid portion of our globe. Through these, the saline water of the great deep maintains an incessant course of circulation; and being subjected to a filtering and purifying process in its passage through the various strata of the earth, is pro-

pelled to the surface and discharged by a thousand outlets, changed in nature and quality, and rendered subservient to all the designed purposes of life. Did these innumerable brooks, streams, and mighty rivers, that traverse the explored and unexplored world, derive their supplies from any other independent source, their ceaseless, unremitting flow into the ocean, during thousands of lapsed ages, must ere now have magnified that element beyond the limits of the cavity assigned to it. And the bustling haunts of traffic that skirt the ocean and crowd the extensive champaigns, must all have vanished in the desolating deluge; and the grotesque piles of antiquity that there survive the ravages of time and the ceaseless vicissitudes of many centuries, must have ceased to attract the admiring gaze of the antiquary. The fertile valleys, laden with the golden treasures of autumn, must all have sunk, and merged in tangly mazes of aquatic weeds. The pleasant meadows, mantled with flowery verdure, and teeming with frisky herds of browsing bestial, must all have been submerged in the swelling flood, and invaded by the finny tribes that sport in the caverns of the deep. The river-skirting forests, the rude plantations of nature, that darken the earth with luxuriant foliage, and wave their towering branches in the winds of heaven, must have all been wrenched from their deep hold of the parent earth, and immersed for ever in the accumulating waters. The foaming billows of the ocean would have been washing the bases of the lofty mountains, and the famishing residue of humanity clinging like grasshoppers to their sloping sides. But why? This is all an enchanted picture, a visionary phantom, a baseless day-dream. No such appalling catastrophe, no such fatal devastation, no such disastrous consummation, seem warpt in the destiny of nature. The raving

hurricane may extend its desolating ravages; the rending earthquake, groaning in hollow murmurs, may engulf its thousands; the dread volcano may belch its boiling torrents of destructive lava; or the fantastic waterspout, with ponderous descent, may overwhelm the trembling mariners as they gaze on its aerial freaks. But whether the ocean slumber in placid stillness and unruffled tranquillity, or rage in thundering majesty and terrific grandeur, she dares not exceed the limits of her empire; and in all her interchanges with the solid element, by inflexible decree, the receipts and disbursements are so equally poised, that Time's final revolution will be unable to quote a fraction of balance. Although the great branches of the ocean, which extend far into the interior of vast tracts of country, affording facilities to commercial intercourse, may sometimes appear to inroad the contiguous lands and villages which adorn their banks, the idea entertained by some, that the ocean is extending her territories, is romantic in the extreme; for as the main body of water maintains an invariable magnitude, these mere dependants, whilst they are advancing on one shore, must be receding from another that is less accessible; and with these assumed powers and partial dealings the ocean is by no means cognisant, though liable to censure. These servile branches amply represent the imperious self-aggrandizing lordlings who in the rational world wear the title of minions, factors, and middlemen, at once the disgrace of their lords, the curse of the soil, and the misery of millions. The Frith of Forth, with which the subsequent narrative is intimately connected, is an extensive and highly-important branch of the German Ocean or North Sea. It extends its navigable waters far into the interior of a rich, a populous, and fertile district of country, whether as regards those indispensable productions that glow and ripen beneath the

glorious effulgence of the sun, or the vast hoards of mineral wealth that lurk in full maturity in the dark and deep recesses of the earth; and by means of this great aquatic highway, the commercial circulation that pervades every vein of the empire receives a quickening and highly-advantageous impulse. It likewise involves, in its latent depths of fathomless concealment, a teeming world of animate existence unscanned by mortal vision. Here the scaly tribes, in ceaseless muster, crowd their legions of interminable extent and infinite variety, and perform their industrial movements, their mystic evolutions, and hostile achievements in the rayless dominions of obscurity. The deep and dusky invisible region which forms the bed of this mighty stream, and swarms with innumerable cold-blooded inhabitants, is by no means a void in creation, or an insignificant blank in the wide province of human affairs; but however remotely secluded from the supervision of man, its distinguishing features are vividly portrayed in the busy whirling circle of national commerce. For when the irritable waters are hushed into a stilly slumber by the placid serenity of the subtler element, or fanned and flattered into a smiling, undreaded aspect by the soothing whispers of the gentle zephyr, then does the bosom of the Forth exhibit a thousand enterprising souls, expert in the management of the net and line, prosecuting with skill and assiduity their precarious and perilous avocation; and so fruitful in wealth is this unexplored mine, that, at a moderate estimate, treasure amounting to more than sixty thousand pounds is annually extracted from its dreary and benighted regions of silent solitude. What must have been the breadth of the Forth when the globe completed its first revolution, or at a more subsequent period, when Scotland again emerged from the sweeping waters of the deluge, were a question of more than difficult solution.

But there exists sufficient circumstantial evidence to warrant the conclusion, that in many localities it has extended far beyond its original limits. And as the result of the most minute survey and accurate calculation, based on a visible ratio, it may be opined that within these eight hundred years it has advanced no less than five furlongs on the solid territory of the county of Fife. Indeed, from the deep-rooted fibres of trees still twined in the rugged cliffs, and the relics of other productions, evidently natives of the stable element, it may be stated on no vague conjecture or visionary surmise, that the whole rocky shore, extending in various instances to more than a mile in breadth, is an invaded territory usurped by this arm of the German Ocean, and that this vast acquisition of marine might and irresistible fury, originally slumbered beneath the woody wilds and unpruned forests that waved in the sighing breeze, groaned in the howling tempest, and supplied to the rambling Caledonu a sheltered retreat amidst all the vicissitudes of their changeful climate. Those vast aquatic invasions constitute no matter of astonishment to those whose local situation affords an opportunity of periodically beholding the dreadfully furious elemental assaults by which they are accomplished. There are two powerful currents in the German Ocean which flow into this Frith—one from the north-east, and another from the south-east—and as the tendency of the latter is wholly towards the north shore when the wind blows violently in the same direction, the effect produced on the coast is awfully grand and sublime. The broad expanse of the waters that erewhile reposed in pacific stillness, being goaded into rage by the ruthless blast of the frowning heavens, assumes a direful aspect of boisterous commotion. The dread, stupendous billows, excited to a pitch of extreme frenzy by the fierce atmospheric influence, roll and heave and tumble in the offing ;

till, united in one phalanx of resistless fury, they roar and dash and thunder among the craggy cliffs and quaking bulwarks, that reel from top to base. The entire seaward prospect presents one romantic scene of unrivalled tumult, of gorgeous confusion, and uproarious conflict. While in glorious ascent like the dust in the whirlwind, or the snowy flakes tossed on the wings of the tempest, the air-borne foam, hurled in wild, impetuous blast, lashes the casements of the rural cottage that looms in the distance, suffuses the fruitful orchard with a scorching, ungenial dew, and disguises the adjacent hills with a hazy mantle. In all such scenes of extreme elemental excitement, wherever the coast is not invulnerably defended by natural or artificial barriers, extensive invasions are inevitable. Even the bold rocky precipices that seem to look defiance to every storm, being galled and undermined by the incessant action of the waves, part connection with the main-land, and, like a ponderous avalanche, fall with astounding crash, imparting a retrograde motion to the billows, which recoil from the attack, and shrink on the instant into the bosom of their parent. These extensive disruptions and violations of the natural barriers are not unfrequently accompanied with a wonderful development of subterranean deposits, that during the lapse of past centuries may have slumbered in the shades of oblivion; foundations of houses, human skeletons, domestic utensils of peculiar construction, and coins of vast antiquity, are relentlessly disturbed in their deep recesses of concealment, and again exposed to the ambient light of heaven, and wondering gaze of a distant generation of mortals—disclosures eminently calculated to inspire the conjecture, if not the established belief, that these territories, which from time to time are invaded by the ravaging billows of the Forth, anciently sustained the rude habitations of industrious humanity, and teemed with

rational existence, unwritten in the page of history, and unnamed in the tale of tradition. And those contiguous villages, which still survive the menacing fury of the waves that dash the casements, deluge the streets, and flood the humble cottages, must, in a space comparatively transient, be likewise subjugated under the sceptre of the ocean, and involved in the overwhelming destruction, were it not for their bulwarks of inflexible defiance. It appears circumstantially evident that this Frith, ever since it rolled in its channel, has, in the manner described, been gradually extending its boundaries on the north by invading every accessible point—thus creating the numerous creeks and juttings that impart to the coast a wild, a rugged, and irregular aspect. Shipwrecks, especially on the north side, are in general dreadfully appalling; the misguided vessel being instantaneously dashed into a thousand pieces, and the ill-fated crew rarely escape a rapid transit to the invisible world.

Some very peculiar circumstances, which rather appear visionary, have been traditionally associated with this great arm of the sea, and are not yet totally extinguished on the East Coast of Fife. Previous to the invention of printing, which originated in Holland about the middle of the fifteenth century, the Sacred Scriptures were very partially disseminated in the British dominions, as may be easily conceived; and, warpt in the shades of intellectual night, rational and accountable beings groped their dubious way, guided solely by the deceptive glimmerings that flickered in the mystified nostrums of priestcraft. Superstitions and prejudices, the natural progeny of ignorance, swarmed like owls and bats in the benighted regions of the soul; and man, though lord of the creation, was held in slavish bondage by the grisly productions of his own romantic fancy. The ancient heathen had his catalogue of gods and genii to whom he looked with adoring re-

verence, and bowed in prostrate obedience : so had the intrepid Briton his legion of dread familiars, his ghosts, his fairies, his kelpies, his brownies, and his spunkies, of which the very idea inspired a feeling of repugnance and shuddering horror. The invaluable art of printing having been introduced into England in that same century by a London merchant, an extensive edition of the Bible was printed by royal authority. A portion of this valuable treasure was forthwith shipped for the capital of Scotland ; but as this was an engine powerfully subversive of the kingdom of darkness, the vessel was destined to encounter many fell attacks, hideous perils, and fearful obstacles, ere she had far proceeded on her hapless voyage. On approaching the Key of the Forth, a legion of kelpies (those demons that preside over all rivers) mustered all their malignant energies in dire opposition ; the air and ocean strove in dreadful conflict, whilst the crazy bark rolled and weltered in the furious onset. The infernals perched amongst the bending masts, the creaking yards and howling cordage, breathing blue flames in streaming pendants, mingling horror in the midnight gloom ; stupendous fiery columns, resembling the Devil's Rock in the Atlantic Ocean, emerging from the fathomless abyss of wild disorder, seemed buoyantly floating amid the foaming, boiling convulsions of the deep, heaving their blazing summits to the clouds, and illumining the dismal concave of heaven ; whilst the reeling, stumbling mariners looked aghast, and, warpt in the toils of a dire dilemma, their British courage and prowess were solved in the crucible of terror and dismay. The page of tradition records not the fate of the vessel, though it affirms her total failure in reaching the place of destination, and the sacred importation was subsequently effected by means of land conveyance. So dreadful was the hue and cry that this circumstance produced in the

empire, that mariners evinced as much aversion to the embarkation of Bibles, as they do now of lucifer matches, or other commodities possessing inherent combustion. And even at the present day some are still so deeply imbued with this peculiar superstition, that when they have occasion to travel by sea, they are extremely fastidious in the choice of the characters with whom they are to embark. And should they perceive a clergyman on board, they will instantly shrink back, change their purpose, and postpone their journey, merely on account of his supposed intimacy with the Bible.

Since that eventful period, these malignant spirits have frequently manifested themselves in a variety of shapes and colours hideous and appalling to the luckless and unwilling spectator. Nay, even in the nineteenth century, when the shades of night had wrapt the creation in a sombre veil of obscurity, they have occasionally ventured to exhibit themselves on this water under the semblance of towering pyramids of fire, flitting with rapid transit from one bank to the other, infusing into many a bewildered soul a feeling of profound amazement, awful apprehension, and overwhelming perplexity. Nor will such apparitions cease to exist, till the fulgent beams of science dispel the mist of ignorance that clouds the intellectual horizon, as the gorgeous radiance of the sun disperses the natural haze that floats in the region of the atmosphere.

“The soul that views effect and cause combined,
May scan results, unmoved by sense of fear;
But, ah! what dread inspires the untutor'd mind
To whom effects without their cause appear!”

CHAPTER III.

At the entrance of the Forth appears in the distance a little world of rational existence, environed by the restless element, and lashed by the foaming billows of the German Ocean. Whether this detached habitation has derived its name—May—from the Irish Maigh, signifying a plain—or from the ancient British Mai, signifying a place of security—has not yet been properly decided. It will be necessary, however, for subsequent purposes, to give a succinct account of what it presently is, and has been, as far as can possibly be acquired either from written record or oral tradition.

This little island, in lat. 56, 11, 22, N., and long. 2, 32, 47, W., is emphatically the Key of the Forth, as it opes the portal of knowledge to the tempest-beaten wanderer bewildered in his trackless course, and guides like a pilot to the destined haven. On this isolated speck, based in the depths of the ocean, nature has by no means lavished her magnificent glories or attractive garniture. No aspiring hills exalt their heath-clad summits in competition with the liquid mountains that heave around it. No clumps of reverend elms, despoiled by the ravages of time, upshoot their towering tops in the lofty altitudes of space, and, by the pressure of the tempest, shake their hoary branches in the fathomless fields of ether. No time-hallowed groves extend their shadowy wings, fledged with the verdure of summer, and in sighing whispers divulge the scenes of vice immured within their shades in the priest-ridden ages of antiquity. No picturesque scenery strikes the vision of the flood-borne stranger, to gratify the sense and indulge the fancy. All exhibits a flat, ungainly aspect, with a few straggling cattle brows-

ing the scanty herbage. The western extremity of the island constitutes the only romantic feature that nature presents—being a huge, rugged, precipitous rock, rising about two hundred and fifty feet in perpendicular ascent, and vocalised, as it were, by the incessant chatter of innumerable covies of aquatic fowl that nestle in the shelvy cliffs. At this inaccessible point there is such a depth of water on all occasions, that vessels of heavy draught may approach almost to contiguity without peril to life or property. In this detached locality, no magnificent display of ancient architecture excites the retrospective research of the inquisitive antiquary. The only antiquated object that meets the observation is comprised in the ruins of a monastic hovel, destitute of every attractive feature, save that of its having survived the ravages of four centuries. This, on account of its peculiar notoriety, will be more particularly adverted to hereafter, according to the receding course of this narrative. How or when this island derived its existence, is a problem still too abstruse for all the blazing stars of science that shed their radiant influence in the nineteenth century; but the mere contemplation of such a query suggests the negro sailor's definition of the origin and antiquity of the West Indies, namely, after the great ubiquitous spirit had compounded and organised the elementary constituents of the great globe, he shook his hand over the sea, and the islands, however small or extensive, are merely the particles of matter that dropt from his fingers. Extravagant and untenable as this position may appear, the visionary notion conceived by the sable African in the savage wilds of benighted barbarism, and the logical hypothesis of the civilized European environed by the halo of literature and the dazzling effulgence of science, are alike suspended on the baseless tower of conjecture, and equally beyond the power of refutation. But although

the origin and antiquity of the May, like all its isolated kindred that bestud the naked bosom of the deep, lie wrapt in a veil of mysterious uncertainty, suffice it for the present that no dark mantle of obscurity, no flickering phantom of dubiety, hangs over its existence, or involves in doubt its eminent utility. As an artificial luminary, it holds a deathless fame in the maritime records of the commercial world, on account of its having for upwards of three centuries diffused a cheering influence through the gloom and horror of midnight. The modern light-disseminating towers constitute the only inviting features displayed in the visage of this circumscribed domain ; being the progeny of the nineteenth century, they are skilfully designed and executed in a style of superb elegance becoming the refined taste of their scientific projector. But though "exceeding magnified," like the gorgeous temple that once gilded the summit of an oriental mountain, all their splendours, all their ornamental grandeur, merge at once in the consideration of their usefulness. When the great fountain of universal light, but for which this world were a dungeon and creation a blank, retires from his diurnal exhibition, and hides his radiant visage behind the bleak mountains or beneath the rolling ocean that bounds the occiduous horizon, he resigns his empire to the shades of night, whilst his beaming minions glimmering from afar hang out their borrowed lustre in the rayless void, and oft expend their energies in vain, then appears the eminent utility of those solitary beacons whose blazing pinnacles extend into the gloomy regions of space and invade the territories of night. When the concave of heaven is wrapt in the dismal horrors of a nocturnal tempest—when the German Ocean, with her transverse currents, roused from her peaceful slumbers by the rude assaults of the ethereal powers, heaves her stupendous billows of frenzied com-

motion, foaming, lashing, and tumbling in wild disorder—and when all the fluctuating elements of nature, goaded into impetuous fury, and when all the celestial minions of the sun, are drowned in the gloomy horrors—then those sublunary planets, subservient to human control, uneclipsed by the sable vesture of heaven, and unquenched by the furious descent of the cloud-rending torrents, continue to dispense their radiant fulgence amid the dire convulsions, illuminating the howling tempest, and gilding the gloom that lowers around their transparent walls—how cheering, how transporting to the bewildered souls that inhabit yon floating mansion that reels and plunges far hence in the offing; drenched by the pouring and heaving elements, buffeted by the ruthless oriental blast, and their crazy, creaking bark ready to founder in the tumultuous surge; all perplexed and mystified in the haze of a dubious reckoning, they roll their despairing eyes around the dark circumference; when, lo! under the last glimpse of expiring hope, they perceive from the summit of a billow the precious diamonds glittering in the bleak horizon; their depressed spirits, emerging from the vale of despondency, assume an elevation before unknown; a glow of fervour pervades their shivering frames, suffused with the chill of advancing dissolution. The springs of action, endowed with a fresh athletus, rouse their dormant energies to a climax of unwonted exertion; and the vessel, being cleared of the insinuating water which despair had permitted to accumulate, rides more buoyant on the waves, and progresses more rapidly to the destined haven. So much for the value of the sea-girt luminaries. On this island, only one nautical luminary lifted its conspicuous head previous to the forty-fourth year of the present century, at which period another was erected towards the north-east point, and specially designed to prevent the numerous appalling and

fatal shipwrecks, the dreadful sacrifice of life and property that in all ages have occurred in such horrifying frequency on that destructive object, the Carr Rock. Various methods have been adopted, in various ages of the world, in order to protect the benighted mariner from approaching this disastrous instrument, this lurking death—but all resulted in a total failure of purpose ; and whether this scheme shall prove more efficacious, the future revolutions of time's unceasing machinery alone can determine. The principal lighthouse is the third erection of that kind since the island first shed a ray of light over the dark waters, and one after another has emerged like the phoenix from the ashes of its predecessor. The present was preceded by one of far less expensive or magnificent construction, which was co-existent with the Scottish Parliament or Convention of Estates. It was erected by legislative enactment ; and as it was considered of incalculable advantage to the maritime commerce, a tax on all shipping for the maintenance of the light on this occasion first derived its existence. This tower survived the vengeful fury of the elements upwards of two centuries, and the light was all the while produced by the burning of coal in a large grate or chaffer established on the summit thereof. Towards the concluding quarter of the eighteenth century, a fatal catastrophe ensued by which the entire effective population of the island was literally exterminated. The regular routine of duties connected with the light having been completed, all retired in perfect tranquillity to enjoy the balm of repose ; no invidious contingency in distant prospect put forth its precursing shadow, inspiring apprehension of danger ; no bleak forebodings of impending fate breathed their insidious whispers into the peaceful bosom, blending with shades the unchequered serenity of the soul. The rosy tinge of health bloomed on every visage ; the fervour of

love, unmarred by the piercing chill of jealousy, glowed in every breast, and unruffled composure, resulting from a conscious discharge of duty, pervaded all the avenues of life, pourtraying on the hopeful mind a felicitous succession of years in bright prospectus, extending far into the dark vista of futurity ; but oft, when borne on the brightest pinions of transport, the succeeding moment is pregnant with the grisly image of death riding in dark seclusion on the whirlwind of destruction ; often when exalted on the loftiest eminence of life, and encompassed with all the dazzling splendours of meridian glory, a rushing torrent from the bleak mountains of fate overwhelms the golden edifice, and mingles its aspiring occupant in the ruinous disaster ; and often the very instrument that ingenuity renders subservient to the preservation of thousands, becomes converted into an agent of terror, a messenger of death, diffusing misery and mourning in the haunts of unsuspecting mortals. Whilst the lofty fire, blazing and flickering in the storm, dispensed a cheering gleam through the darkened sky, directing the mariners to evade the rocks and shoals of devastation, it silently insinuated its sulphureous fumes into the chamber of its slumbering governor ; the pernicious influence of which, imperceptibly pervading the vital organs of the inmates, like the baneful venom of a serpent, suppressed the respiring alternations and checked the whole machinery of life ; and the happy family, serenely wrapt in the soft mantle of Morpheus, and placidly reclining on the lap of repose, ere long became locked in the icy trammels of death, all unconscious of their awful position, till, by a sudden transit, the boundless, changeless regions of infinitude dawned upon their astonished vision.

At this period, the entire population of the island was comprehended in one household, and on that account none remained to report the fell catastrophe ; and it was

only in consequence of no light appearing at the appointed period that an enquiry was instituted, and the hapless destiny of the colonists ascertained. A vessel having been despatched from the north coast on a reconnoitering expedition, the crew on their arrival perceived nothing but sombre desolation wielding an iron sceptre of absolute dominion. No human figure loomed on their excursive vision, no sound of human voice saluted their listening ears, and no symptomatic vestige appeared to prove the occupancy of rational beings; but on forcing admission into the ill-fated domicile, their gazing wonder was heightened into horrifying amazement, when the astounding spectacle obtruded itself on their visual organs. The whole inhabitants of the colony, apparently in the comfortable attitude of repose, lay stiffened in the ruthless grasp of death, insensible and motionless as the isolated rock they inhabited. Only one helpless infant, the innocent pledge of their love, altogether unconscious of its dreary and doleful situation, survived the disaster, and was still clinging to the cold, ungenial breast of its lifeless mother. Surely this was an object calculated to melt the soul of adamant into tears of sympathy, if solvable at all in any position, or by any created existence. How this infant resisted the stifling influence of the sulphureous vapour appears abundantly mysterious, as it cannot well be accounted for on natural principles. Some have alleged that its preservation was effected by a circulation of air drawn from the breast of its mother whilst in the act of sucking. Whether this conjecture be well or ill founded is of very little importance; suffice it to say, that the infant assuredly survived the calamitous event—a living monument in the midst of death—and attained to the age of maturity.

Anterior to this fatal occurrence, the island was inhabited by several fishermen, who prosecuted their preca-

rious calling with considerable success, the fish being found there in greater abundance than on any other part of the Forth. When the elements assumed an aspect so boisterous as to render their excursions perilous, they frequently resorted to certain quarters of the island where the rock is perpendicular and the water deep, and there took up their angling position in perfect security; but on every occasion they carefully avoided approaching the South Ness, there being a cave in that locality of considerable extent which was then the reputed residence of a colony of kelpies. Oft in the stilly silence of midnight their ears had been assailed by ungracious sounds proceeding from the dreary cavern. Wafted on the faint, whispering breeze, the uncouth din of infernal carousals, in hollow echoes and shivering vibrations, proclaimed the horrors of the dread locality; and when the wide creation slumbered in her sable coverlet, a season ever pregnant with terrors to the timid soul, blue streams of fire ascending from the dell diffused a pallid lustre through the rayless dominions of night, whilst the horrific yell of triumph from the malignant fraternity, and the intermediate shrieks of despair from hopeless captives, rent the dark canopy, and growled in horrid, heart-chilling murmurs amongst the craggy cliffs and frowning precipices. Such were the dismal sounds, fearful sights, and appalling apprehensions, that incessantly harassed the otherwise dauntless minds of fishermen. And as this false terror was ingeniously fostered and promoted by those whom they regarded as superiors, for the furtherance of advantageous purposes, they continued to labour under its teasing, torturing influence, throughout the entire duration of their natural existence; and even in the present age, how many thousands of rational beings pass through the turmoils of a long, an active, and valuable life, locked in similar fetters of enslaving bondage—a yoke more gall-

ing and oppressive than all the toils, dangers, and privations to which they are subjected in the visible world, where they are conversant only with effects; and being in nowise familiar with the fact that every effect in nature is merely the result of a natural cause, and the moving principles by which events are governed being wholly enveloped in mystery, every peculiar sight, sound, or circumstance occurring in the material creation, is invariably ascribed to infernal agency. Such, indeed, were the romantic conceptions in which the inflexible opinions of the island fishermen were immoveably based, and to which they were riveted with indissoluble tenacity; but as the natural haze that mystified their mental horizon was increased and thickened by subtle design, and the horrors of the cave heightened and augmented, and rendered subservient to the accomplishment of sinister purposes, the plot must now be developed.

When rayless night o'erspreads the vaulted skies,
When tempests rage, and furious oceans foam,
The sea-borne wight yon nautic lamp descries,
That guides him to his long-deserted home.

CHAPTER IV.

THE lightkeeper, at the period referred to, enjoyed the superlative felicity of being parent and guardian to an only daughter, adorned by a profusion of amiable qualities; and amongst other admirable accomplishments, she possessed an heroic intrepidity of soul little inferior to that which animated and distinguished the darling heroine of the Fern Islands. She likewise possessed a sort of stoical equanimity of temper, and a particular suavity of man-

ners, which, by a peculiar diversity in her demeanor, she happily adapted to the various dispositions that inhabited the constituents of every pleasure-party that visited the island ; and by these fascinating qualities, she obtained easy access into the favour and good opinion of all in whose company she occasionally mingled. According to fisher Bill's estimation, " she was nae world's wonder for beauty, but she was a stately, strappin', wiselike cummer, for a' that ; an' nane o' the pridefu', stickit-up cutties that watna wha's aught them, an' canna see a puir body without fcezin' up their nose like a fiddle-pin, an' glow'rin' adreich as gif ane were a bogle i' their ecn. I've nae behal'f o' thae gaudy butterflees, sae fu' o' their sel', an' sae dazzled with the glare o' their ain wings, that their een dar'na look on the very yird they were made o', as gif they had fa'en frae the stars ; for nae honest man, wi' ony skair o' smeddim, likes to be luckit doon on whar he aw's naething. But Jeanie had aye mair gumption than kythe sac prond a stem, or carry sic a gust o' wind in her head sail. Whare'er we forgather'd, she was aye sae cud-dant, that nane could tell whether we were sib or friend. An' our weal was ne'er very far frae her heart, for aft she'd say, 'Tack tent, men, an' had yersels skaithless frae thae deils i' the South-Ness, for ye weel ken they mak' meikle ill-faur'd din mony a nicht, an' fill the left wi' their 'fernal gleams as gif the hale clouds were in a lowe.' "

The wholesome counsel, so generously tendered by the favourite young lady, was no doubt as strictly adhered to as it was gratuitously bestowed, for the dismal prepossessions which they entertained respecting the malignant beings rendered their minds easily accessible by proffered caution to avoid entanglement ; and however much good advice has in all ages been lost on minds unprepared for its reception, and unsusceptible of appreciating its value, this from the lady made an indelible impres-

sion that remained uneffaced through all the vicissitudes of their laborious life. Perfect confidence in the sincere friendship of the counsellor is on all occasions the most efficient pioneer for abolishing the formidable obstructions that frequently prevent the entrance of wholesome admonition. And in the present instance it existed in its fullest extent, exerted its largest influence, and produced its contingent effects in due proportion ; insomuch that whenever a sally of the kelpies was announced by a blazing exhibition of blue flambeaux ascending from the dreadful cavern, every fisherman, however employed, and whether on land or sea, summoned all his physical energies into immediate operation, and, propelled by the resistless impulse of terror, sped to his domicile with quaking heart, erect hair, and suffused with cold perspiration ; where (having adopted judicious measures to avert incursions of the stygian foe) they remained in rayless darkness and profound silence till the sun, emerging from the German Ocean, dispersed the solemn shade that eclipsed the beauteous aspect of nature, and chased the nightly apparitions to their darksome caverns of repose, for their peculiar composition has ever been of too delicate a texture to bear the flaming radiance of that glorious luminary.

Now, the grand secret in which this mysterious lodgement of infernal beings was wrapt, appears from the tradition to be simply this : An extensive speculator in contraband commodities, residing on the south-east coast of Fife, having visited the Isle of May, and cast his eyes on the lightkeeper's daughter, became inspired (charitably speaking) with the purest emotions of platonic love ; and finding that he had effectually won the affections of the damsel, and ingratiated himself into the favour of all concerned, he began to perceive, amidst the transporting felicity and ecstatic bliss accruing from love's transporting intercourse, that the enchanted cave might be turned

into good account. And having proved the position of her mind, under the sensuous possession of secrets, by whispering into her ear certain ingenious fabrications as if they had involved concerns of vast importance, he soon discovered that—however burdensome matters of secrecy were to many of her sex, whose bosoms enjoyed no tranquillity under them, and like a stomach convulsed by weak digestion, felt no relief but from disgorging—she possessed a mind perfectly at ease under secrets apparently of the highest importance. As secrecy has ever been the smuggler's shibboleth, and the very basis of his prosperity, Jeanie was therefore initiated into the secrets of the contraband traffic.

It occasionally happened that the north coast was rendered entirely inaccessible to the flushing traders, by reason of scouting parties of excisemen patrolling the beach. Under such emergencies, the vessels, being warned by signal from the shore, were obliged to maintain a respectful offing, being in danger every instant of detection, pursuit, and capture by the coast blockade. Many a hot chase and bloody engagement ensued, for smuggling vessels were powerfully manned and armed; whilst the crews, inspired by a reckless spirit and furious valour, disdained to yield to any power but the king of terrors. In this hazardous enterprise, which was extensively pursued, much life and property were frequently sacrificed. But the cave on the May proved a most advantageous discovery; for the commodities, being landed there without suspicion, were transferred to the coast when conveniency offered. Hereby the Fife smugglers enjoyed in this little island a series of love and lucre, bliss and benefit richly blended in beautiful harmony. As all the illicit evolutions were performed under the sable vestment of night, ever inspiring a thousand terrors, the foreign tongues and flickering torches gave evident token that

the infernal tenants of the cave were engaged in scenes of horrific revelry, or executing diabolic vengeance on some hapless human victims devoted to destruction; during which smuggling manœuvre no interruption was apprehended from the piscatory inhabitants, who, recking the premonition of an esteemed friend, remained in voluntary durance under every possible security they could devise. Sweet sleep, the restorer of exhausted nature, sealed not their eyes; but quaking, trembling vigilance engrossed the whole period of repose. With respect to these transactions, the lightkeeper behoved to evince the deepest obscurity of affected ignorance, lest an untoward explosion of the secret should involve him in the ruinous consequences; therefore upon Jeanie, the lovely object of the smuggler's admiration, devolved the task of daily visiting the cave, to ascertain if the tubs, kegs, boxes, &c., were all continuing in perfect order, and sustaining no waste by leakage. This was always performed when the sun shone high in the heavens; for, however courageous, she never ventured on the hazard of a nocturnal entrance, and on every such occasion she carried a concealed lantern, which was absolutely indispensable in the dark interior of the cavern. But on one of her periodical scrutinies, a circumstance occurred which, though trivial in itself, and in a locality fraught with less dreadful associations, would have proved harmless; but in this it was productive of the most deplorable result. The portable light which she carried having been placed in an eligible position while she was ruminating amongst the contraband materials, was by some accident dislodged and extinguished by the fall. A chill of consternation, rapid as the lightning's flash, pervaded all the avenues of life; a shuddering horror plunged the nervous system into dread, paralysing agitation; whilst the horrid catalogue of feigned terrors with which she tortured the fisher-

men invaded her trembling soul in all their appalling realities. In dreadful array, she beheld the host of infernals, in frightful muster, staring and grinning with horrific grimace; the blazing flames that streamed from their stygian eyes assailed her disordered vision, and glowed upon her cheek; whilst from their yawning mouths affrighted fancy drew the hideous yells of triumph that erewhile teemed in her own blood-chilling descriptions. As she rolled her frantic eyes towards the vestibule of the gloomy pandemonium, and beheld the glorious light of heaven shedding its benign influence on all the world besides, a lurid glimpse of reason amid suspended consciousness suggested means of escape; but, in yielding obedience to the soul-comforting dictate, one of the grizzly demons seized the skirt of her garment, and checked her progress in the first hopeful exertion. Raised to the veriest climax of distraction, she screamed and shrieked under the dismal agonies of final despair.

It most opportunely happened that old fisher Bill was keeping holiday, and cruising about the island, habited in his huge go-ashore jacket, so ample in length that the skirt hung dangling over his loins, shivering and walloping in the wind like an unfurled topsail hove aback. His sturdy limbs, fortified by a pair of rough blue stockings with white tops, drawn half thigh up, according to custom, over his inexpressibles, which were buttoned over the knees; and the entire figure being surmounted with a braw new Kilmarnock night-cap, exhibited a rare specimen of genuine antiquity. Hearing the distracted screams of the immured damsel, whose voice to him was perfectly familiar, he started, and staring aghast, muttered out, "I'll wad a groat that smatchit is ta'en wi' the kelpies;" he instantly backed ship, and made all sail for the lighthouse to acquaint her father, who endeavoured to wave him off by some crafty evasion; but a

piteous shriek, wafted on the fleet wings of the wind, having penetrated his ear, he was shut up to the conclusion that some accident must have befallen her. Attracted by the melting voice of extreme misery, blended with the hollow murmur of the subterranean echoes, he bounded with fiend-hunted agility towards the locality whence it proceeded, leaving the old weather-beaten nautic all but riveted to the earth, with his eyes expanded in gazing wonder at the man's foolhardy recklessness. At this eventful juncture, whether the captive in the cavern, her father, or old Bill, endured the most poignant twinges of soul, or possessed the darkest region of suspense, it is very difficult to determine ; but the damsel's afflicted parent was first at the ultimatum of his perplexity, having discovered his daughter, not clutched in the hands of a devil, or any other infernal agent from the realms of darkness, belching torrents of terrific fire, but clenched in the grasp of a huge parton that had ensconced himself in a cleft of the rock ! From the trammels of this scrambling tenant of the deep, cased in his native armour, she might have promptly extricated herself but for the enslaving panic by which her mental faculties as well as her physical energies were totally invalidated. The well-known idiom of her father's voice, as he entered the cave, crying, "Lassie, what i' the warlt's come o'er ye, or what the de'il way are ye there ?" shot a gliff of surprise and transport, mingled with distrust, through the distracted mind of the hapless Jeanie, locked in satanic fetters ; but catching her by the hand to conduct her out of the gloomy solitude, he found his efforts resisted, and heard a scrambling noise from some invisible cause. As he groped with his hands, he ascertained the real cause of all this interruption and disquietude, muttering all the while, "The de'il's in't if I dinna see the end o't ;" when, in an instant, the being cased in the scarlet panoply seized hold of one

of his digits ; panic-struck, he fired off an involuntary ban, and exclaimed, " O'd, the de'il's i' the brute ; a parton, faith ! " Having smashed the pest with his foot, he effected the release of both himself and his daughter, whom he translated to the regions of day. The visible effect of this disastrous campaign on him, evinced itself in life's crimson fluid trickling from his crab-bit finger ; but on the buxom Jeanie, in consequence of the dismal terror sustained, it exhibited itself in a total aberration of intellect. Being incessantly haunted by all the ghastly figures that any disordered imagination could possibly create, the most extreme case of *delirium tremens*, or Scotch horrors, was never more fertile in the production of devils and dreadful visions than was that of the hapless damsel ; which being supervened by a peculiar species of monomania, she became literally converted by the wild fancy into a blazing pyramid of fire. In dreadful array recoiled upon herself all the exaggerated horrors that her deceptive ingenuity invented and exhibited to the minds of the fishermen, wrapt in the toils of superstition ; and the very tortures she inflicted on confiding simplicity, by feeding and fanning the fire of false terror which slumbered in the region of ignorance, returned with increased virulence into her own bosom. What vast mountains of misery, reared by a prostitution of talents, oft cast their dark shadows over the rational world ; whilst the unsuspecting credulity of mortals, wearing the image of their Author, is rendered subservient to the furtherance of illicit traffic, and the aggrandisement of grasping ambition. Such a system of fallacious courtesy involves, in its very design, a total prostration of candour, integrity, and every amiable principle on the one hand, and the reckless subversion of human comfort on the other. Ever since this fair world became the hapless victim of deceptive eloquence, feigned attachment and fallacious courtesy have

frequently awakened in the unsuspecting soul the fervent glow of genuine affection. This fact is clearly exemplified in the case of the lightkeeper's daughter and the fishermen of the island. None ever displayed more heart-melting sympathy on her account than was evinced by those very beings on whose credulity she had so successfully practised, and who continued to maintain the unshaken belief that she was dragged into the cavern and mallegroozed by the kelpies. And old Bill, convening his neighbours, harangued them thus—"A weel, men, ye a' ween how muckle doolfie terror we hae lang dreed anent that South Ness an' its unearthly canallie. For my skair, mony's the waukrif nicht I've brookit, thinkin' at ilka gliffin' I'd be kidnappit like a flee in a nettercap's web, an' hurled amang their blue lowes to the benner end o' the vout, ne'er mair to behauld the face o' the sin. An' now I'm an auld man, an' canna thole to be sae tulzied; an' mair betaiken, I jalouse that thae kelpies that used to rampauge in the dark winna spare to dwang an infeeerie wight like me i' the braid day. Now, tent ye, men, as I rede ye for yer weal, dinna pit yersels i' their gintress, an' taurie nae langer here than ye douna help it. Reck ye this frae me, ere I gang to the toun o' Crail, i' the whilk I was born. Ye see what's befa'en that winsome lassie that was aye sae daffin' wi's, an' sae blyde to see's aye unskaithe'd by the kelpies. When her daddie pu'd her out o' their net, there was naething left but the wraith o' her, an' my een's ne'er lightit on the face o' her sinsyne. But whene'er I think on't, am like to be smored i' the dool, my heart grows grit, an' I canna keep frae greetin'; for I'm no sae rumstogrous as some ither folk that wadna swerf to see ane's head ta'en aff; an' she was aye a good frien'——"

Here ceased abruptly the simple strains of native eloquence, the tremulous accents of the man of feeling being

arrested and totally subdued by the stifling influence of profound sorrow. His entire soul displayed itself in his receding eyes, that swam in the saline waters of sympathy; whilst his grief-swollen heart, besieged with grisly terror, gave vent to its dread oppression in the melting torrents of affection that rushed in copious effusion over his furrowed cheeks; the vital course of perspiration became broken and hampered by the bursting sighs that swelled and heaved in the bosom of age; and the entire muscular system, convulsed with the sobbings of grief, evinced the intensity of feeling and depth of emotion that subjugated every faculty of his afflicted soul. Never did a rough and sterile visage surmount a heart so fusible by the acid of human sufferings, and never did a prospective index more belie the latent quality it professed to represent. But oft the most precious and most splendid productions of nature inhabit the least inviting localities, and the most delicate, the most delicious fruit presents the least attractive exterior; so do those amiable qualities that adorn and exalt humanity frequently exist in statues rude and ungainly, nay, even repulsive to the fastidious vision. Never did Demosthenes, with all his oratorical flourishes and pathetic eloquence, more effectually solve his audience into one mass, than did the old fisherman's gushing tears and convulsive sighs reduce his fellows' to his own similitude, and conciliate their diversified sentiments.

Every passion that actuates the human soul has an extreme height of inflation or depth of depression; and when this climax is attained, the throne of reason reels and totters to its very base, the whole rational faculties are stented to the utmost pitch of enduring, and the entire man, unguarded, staggers on the brink of a precipice. On this very principle, the supervention of one iota of additional pressure must at once overturn the mental consti-

tution, derange the motion of the rational machinery, and convert the internal faculties into one confused mass of discordant elements. But under such extremities, the organs of sense, when unrestrained, operate as safety-valves to the mind, by yielding to the internal pressure, and giving vent to the excess of impulse. Witness, for instance, the wild, foaming vituperations of anger, bursting from the mouth like the rending of a thundercloud; whilst the electric fluid, with dread-inspiring glare, appears flashing from the envenomed eyes—excessive joy, discharging itself in frantic ebullitions of mirth; whilst the visage, in all its lineaments, exhibits the vivid portrait of boisterous happiness. The ponderous pressure of overwhelming sorrow relieves itself through the vocal organs in the plaintive voice of wailing, whilst the pallid aspect, mantled with deep dejection, portrays the image of rueful misery; and the quaking excitement, induced by appalling terror, operating on the physical energies, slackens the desperate impulse by immediate flight from the grisly object or dreadful locality; whilst the erect hair, expanded mouth, and staring eyes, evince the internal emotions of the soul. Thus, every passion has its peculiar outlet, as an indispensable preventive of disastrous consequences; and by suppressing the action of these alleviating valves during the pressure of increasing impulse, you at once induce the awful catastrophe. Reason tumbles from her glorious pinnacle of dominion, and the whole intellectual empire, as if visited by an earthquake, becomes a chaos of wild disorder. So powerful was the terrific influence exercised by these imaginary demons over the untutored minds of the fishermen, that their unanimous resolve to abandon for ever their isolated residence was immediately carried into execution; and with due deference to the sapient counsel of their senior, they transferred themselves to the royal burgh of Crail,

where, during the subsequent portion of their lives, they persevered in their nautical avocation, ever cautious in keeping at a respectful distance from the suspicious locality. The island has never since been inhabited by fishermen, except under the iron sceptre of dire necessity; that is, when, overtaken in their perilous calling by a casual frenzy in the elements of nature, they have been reluctantly compelled to seek shelter on the luminous isle, and cast themselves on the hospitality of the light-keeper.

Primary causes do not always exhaust their effective principle in the production of one solitary event, but frequently a series of consequences result in close succession, claiming affinity to one progenitor. Accordingly, the removal of these terror-exiled islanders put a final period to the illicit practice of smuggling, so successfully managed in that quarter; for the legendary tales in which the fishermen indulged, with all the seriousness of irrefragable truth, inspired the responsible parties with apprehension lest such should engender suspicion in the excise officials, and excite the inquisitive principle to the searching climax—an event which in all likelihood would have issued in irretrievable ruin.

'Midst fancied ills, through every region quakes
The gorgeous structure, on imposture raised;
Whilst undismay'd, no gust of terror skakes
Th' ungarnish'd tower, on solid candour based.

CHAPTER V.

THE plain unassuming tower, the work of antiquity, being now superseded by the gorgeous edifice of the

nineteenth century, it may be expedient to notice some remarkable events that accompanied its erection in the dark ages of feudalism. Although this substantial beacon, which is a creature of the Scottish Legislature, be now eclipsed by its successor, despoiled of its luminous splendours, and converted into an asylum for storm-bested fishermen, it still occupies a conspicuous place in the volume of tradition; and time may continue her ceaseless revolutions, and future generations may be rolled into the darkness of chaos, but this memorial sculpture will survive the wrecks of change, and shine in legible characters through a fathomless descent of ages—nay, when the sculptor's impression shall have been expunged from the tablets of marble, and the monumental towers crumbled into dust by the corroding elements of nature, even till the final revolution of time shall have produced the last succession of mortals.

At the period when this conservative tower, the work of long-lost ages, first chequered with its stretching shadow the isolated landscape, displayed its stature in the watery distance, and illumed the black tempest with the flickering light that blazed from its summit, a dense fog overshadowed the moral horizon of Scotland; the radiant beams of science but faintly glimmered through the dusky atmosphere, and the tangly fibres of superstition warpt in a maze of error the rational image of heaven; and thus, immured in a rayless dungeon of intellectual darkness, every peculiar sight that flashed on the visual orbs, every uncouth sound that invaded the auricular organs, inspired the haze-wrapt minds with profound amazement or perplexing disquietude. In this state of bewilderment, few being sufficiently competent to reconcile effects with their concomitant causes, every disastrous event occurrent in human destiny was invariably ascribed to the malign influence of satanic agency, and in accord-

ance with this belief, numerous were the rational beings whom jealousy stamped with the brand of infernal compact, and in pinioned helplessness consigned to the fiery ordeal of persecution, and doomed to expiate their alleged guilt in the ruthless bosom of the blazing pile. Many a fair spot of Caledonian territory has acquired an unenviable and imperishable fame as the unhallowed theatre of those barbarous and soul-harrowing exhibitions, when the excursive eye, in traversing diverse localities, embraces the low sequestered hillocks of infamous celebrity, though mantled with the flowery verdure of summer, and waving their luxuriance in the balmy zephyr. A shrinking, shuddering sensation of unmingled horror freezes the streams of vitality when such grassy heaps are contemplated as the ancient altars of bewildering superstition—altars that sustained those piles of combustion whence ascended the life-devouring flames with awful grandeur into the regions of space, shedding a dreadful radiance through the vaulted canopy of heaven; whilst, blending with the execrations of demon-hearted prejudice, the piercing shrieks of the poor defenceless victims of priestcraft reverberated with heart-chilling echoes amongst the heath-clad hills and adjacent woodlands. Such appears to have been the hapless destiny of unprotected humanity in that remote, that benighted, fiend-ridden age of superstition, and such the revolting scenes that the vigilant luminaries of heaven were frequently constrained to witness on the plains of Scotia, until the beams of knowledge radiated into the soul, enveloped in all but tangible darkness, dispelling the shades of ignorance, and effacing the deep impressions of barbarity which the untutored mind is ever apt to receive from objects of external contact. Then, as the cheering harbinger of day suffuses with golden tinges the firmamental gloom by which the beauties of nature are wrapt in temporary obscurity, and heralds

the accession of the infinitely more splendid effulgence of the sun, so the precursing glimpses of knowledge gradually abolished those hideous spectacles of smoking, blazing, heartrending cruelty ; and introduced a species of negative virtue, as an earnest of those angelic sympathies, those active deeds of benevolence, that shed a halo around the Christian character.

From these sentiments there may be deduced the sweeping inference, that crime and cruelty are the natural concomitants of ignorance ; and that the human soul, destitute of artificial light, is a malignant compound of every unamiable quality ; but whatever may have been the condition of uncivilised society, even in the darkest ages of the world, however stained and blotched with flagrant and appalling delinquency, the idea that such savage principles are inherent in the nature of man seems too preposterous for admission. This degrading conception was calculated, in effect, to reduce the noblest work of creation, the image and companion of Deity, to a level in the scale of existence with the bear or the tiger. The forfeiture of man's primeval innocence, with the glory and felicity that constituted its legitimate concomitants, can never warrant a conclusion so utterly wretched and deplorable ; for though maimed and shattered and shipwrecked by his disastrous contact with the fatal shoals of apostacy, the impress of divinity is still legible in the glorious star of reason that shines in the region of the intellect, eclipsing the brightest rays of instinct, and asserting her claim of pre-eminence over the boundless empire of animate being. It is manifest, however, that man's pristine act of rebellion introduced fell disorder into every department of the intellectual system, imparted an evil bias to the affections, and disseminated a bewildering mist over the moral atmosphere of the soul. And if the monarch of the forest de-

rive a curved inclination from the hand of nature, a much smaller application of physical power will prove more effective in deepening the curve and narrowing the segment, than in reducing the natural bend and reversing its tendency. So, likewise, by reason of the constitutional bias of the affections, and the veil of moral darkness in which the mind is enveloped, the influence of vicious example operates with greater facility upon the heart than the precepts and practice of virtue; hence crime and cruelty, contracted by external impressions, still exist to an alarming extent in the scientific climes of civilised Europe, as well as in the barbarous regions of New Zealand. But that such principles are by nature incorporated in the constitution of the human soul, seems quite a paradox, and must continue to be so, until those demoniac attributes can be reconciled with that orb of divine light, the implantation of heaven, that alone exalts humanity beyond the instinctive creation. The inoffensive simplicity of the Hottentot appears rather to be the natural characteristic of man, uncontaminated by the insidious influence of evil example. To elicit shadows of evidence in favour of this hypothesis, it is unnecessary to traverse the burning sands of Arabia, or scan the deep solitude that reigns in the trackless wilds of Africa, or to ransack the countless islands that bestud the tranquil bosom of the great Pacific; for in the remote rural localities and the sequestered glens under the shelter of the Caledonian mountains, humanity may be found free from the specious gloss of art, and almost in its nativity, enjoying in rustic seclusion more genuine felicity than the gorgeous glare of artificial refinement, or the studied pageantry of pomp and etiquette, can confer on the luxurious inmates of a princely palace. Here exist the living images of industry, unblasted by the withering scowl of envy, and unscorched by the torturing flame of ambition; ignorant

of the deceptive blandishments and polite imposture that rear their brazen crest in the social world ; their entire demeanour is characterised by respectful diffidence, unassuming modesty, and extreme reserve. The youth are more particularly remarkable on account of their native simplicity of manners, retiring bashfulness, and inherent humility of mein, under the influence of which they shrink abashed from the presence of their own species in whom appears any external disparity. But a flower of still lovelier hue and more inviting perfume expands its fragrant blossoms, its life-cheering sweets, amid these apparently uncourteous regions, outrivalling the splendid imitations that lift their ostentatious heads in rich parterres, that bask in brighter sunshine, and sip the dew of more auspicious heavens ; or, dropping the allegory, these simple, unlettered semi-originals exhibit the very reverse of crime and cruelty, in the purity of that benevolence, the depth of that sympathy, and that unbounded hospitality that in all ages have obtained, even to a proverb. This is man under the simple tuition of nature, and uncorrupted by those artificial qualities inspired by vicious example. Quit, now, this scene of contemplation, and by a sudden transit plunge into the crowded bosom of the splendid city, the dazzling seat of literary refinement ; the populous town, fraught with the hum of bustle, the din of industry, and the whirl of commerce ; and the obscure village, immersed in the gloom of ignorance, overwhelmed in the vortex of sense, and locked in ignominious thralldom, beneath the grovelling vassalage of animal indulgence—and if these be tenanted by the same species of being, how striking must the contrast appear ! What an infinite variety of character developes itself in these busy haunts, this rational medley, this teeming world of artificial existence, all exhibiting their respective impressions derived from external contact, heightened or deep-

ened, brightened or shaded, by the continuity of pressure. Here the polished gentleman, of stern veracity, and inflexible virtue ; the gilded impostor, reflecting the shadow of truth from a fictitious substance ; the ardent philanthropist, devoting every energy of his soul to promote the general exaltation of humanity ; and the perfidious assassin, with the friendly glow of gratulation in the one hand and the fatal poignard in the other ; the student, plunging in the dark recesses of profound lore, or soaring in astronomic heights ; and the grovelling sensualist, wallowing in the quagmire of ignorance ; with all the intervening gradations of character, from the proud, magnificent palace of luxuriance, to the veriest hovel of wretchedness. And here crime and cruelty are associated with the human statue polished by art, as well as with the rude block of nature. It is therefore presumed that these are acquired principles, and not inherent in the constitution of man ; otherwise, man is possessed of a more savage nature than the most rapacious of the irrational creation, such being rarely known to attack and devour their own species, and as this is incompatible with man's exalted status, the whole barbarity that obtains in the rational world must be the fell result of early-instilled prejudice, and a spurious system of moral training, both by precept and example ; whose joint impulse, operating on the natural bent of the will, effects a rapid and deplorable progress on the broad declivity. Even the youth of tender age, that in the rural districts shrink from the presence of their superiors, through the indulgence of their guardians, and encouragement in detestible practices, acquire a brazen impertinence that is altogether insupportable ; and if two or three gentlemen chance to meet in the public thoroughfare, and enter into any commercial discussion, they are promptly attended by a retinue of these ill-disciplined urchins, who ap-

proach in close proximity, as if they were members of the same firm, whilst their pert visage exhibits the repulsive lineaments of the most audacious impudence; and should a reproof be hazarded by any of the gentlemen, the effrontery displayed by these little eavesdroppers, in vindication of their common right to such a position, is almost incredible. Youth thus trained to violate the laws of common civility, and supersede all deference to superiority, can never after be wrought into good members of society—for, though the sapling may be twisted into any form by judicious management, it is extremely difficult to bend the sturdy oak; but as the sparkling splendours of the diamond appear to most advantage when environed by the dingy shades of the amethyst, so, were it not for the admixture of vice in the world, virtue would never appear in the brilliancy of its native lustre.

Although the transmission and distribution of the human family over the various regions of the globe seems wrapt in a veil of mystery, it will be readily admitted that all, of whatever clime or complexion, have one paternal descent; but that, in consequence of man's primitive revolt, one should possess more inherent depravity than another, is quite an untenable position. Hence the horrid deeds of unrelenting cruelty that have been perpetrated by man in every age of the world, must be the result of acquired principles, and not the necessary consequence of savage ingredients in the natural disposition. It therefore seems obvious that virtue, with all its amiable concomitants, is the happy result of a well-regulated system of tuition; and vice, with all its infernal retinue, flows not from ignorance, but the early infusion of pernicious principles; and in both cases, habit works these respective qualities into perfect consonance with the feelings and affections. Under the influence of the former, the heart is mollified into a temperature of tender sympathy that

extends to every object, whether rational or sensitive; and under that of the latter, the heart becomes hardened into adamant, and "all pity choked with custom of fell deeds." Some enjoy the sanguinary horrors of war, and delight to wade amid the carnage of the battle-field. What but a vitiated taste, resulting from a system of spurious culture, could sustain the heart of a delicate female, while she bore in a vessel the head of a man reeking from the corpse and dripping with gore, as if it had been a beautiful garland culled from the richest parterre? And what but a mind perverted by evil communication could qualify the most callous of Adam's descendants to behold with complacency the flaming faggots, and the writhings of the tortured victims involved in the fiery ordeal? But why ransack the gloomy catalogue of entombed ages, why explore the sullen catacombs, and exhume the fell deeds of depraved antiquity, to exemplify the malignant influence of inveterate habit on the moral sensibilities of man? Are there not human devils still extant within the precincts of the British empire, that manifest themselves in the studied perfidy and the cold-blooded massacres that frequently stain the annals of modern history? The rapacious dispositions by which these tangible demons are actuated, cannot surely be ascribed to the prime Cause whence the beings themselves derived their existence; therefore such are not the innate principles of humanity, but acquired by social contamination and confirmed by habitual practice.

Innumerable, however, are the melancholy proofs that man, in his gradual descent through the dark vista of lost ages, has miserably degenerated both in his physical, moral, and intellectual constitution; insomuch that one is apt to assume the indefensible position, that there exists as boundless a variety of the human species as of the inferior animals. Such, indeed, are the baleful effects

of vicious practices on the noblest terrestrial existence—that the world of mankind represents a multifarious creation, rather than a legitimate descent from one common Progenitor. And in consequence of this degenerating process diffusing its deteriorating influence through a protracted series of generations, there now exists in the race a vast phrenological diversity of temperament. This diversity operates so visibly on the formations of the cranium, that modern science can actually read in the external organs the latent dispositions of the mind; and these are as varied in nature and quality as the complexion, stature, and features, by which one man is distinguished from another. Vigour of intellect, prudential caution, and sympathetic benevolence, are here presumed to be essential ingredients in the composition of the rational nature which survived the forfeiture of innocence, and still display their divine lustre in the wide theatre of darkness and degeneracy, like the silvery orbs in the spacious night-wrapt canopy. Whence, then, proceeds that mental disorder so extensively diffused through every grade of society, and in every region of the peopled earth? Whence those fiery, impetuous spirits, who, inspired with reckless intrepidity, oft peril their all to secure a mere figment, or effect some desperate achievement unworthy of a moment's consideration? Whence that sordid selfishness by which thousands of rational beings are locked up in themselves, all their feelings and sympathies, however acute, being circumscribed within the narrow sphere of their own little hearts? And whence that dastardly cowardice, that timidity of soul which enslaves the entire faculties of the mind, controls the whole corporeal energies, and compels a man to flee at the sound of a shaken leaf, or tremble at his own shadow? These principles must all be the result of contraction, either from precept, example, or procreation; or haply a combination

of all—for who would hazard the blasphemous opinion that such unamiable qualities were ever interwoven with the human composition by the stern decree of Omnipotence? for in exact accordance with the undeviating course of nature, whether in the animal or vegetable empire, the thing produced represents the external figure, and involves the essential qualities of the thing from which it derived its existence. Therefore it seems impossible, that when the progenitors are the subjects of physical debility, vitiated morals, and mental imbecility, the progeny can inherit vigour of body, purity of mind, unclouded reason, sentiment refined. And any occurrence of this kind must evidently exhibit a natural paradox; nay, to entertain any opinion to the contrary were virtually to dissolve the inseparable connection of cause and consequence. Thus, nine-tenths of the crime and cruelty prevalent in the world appears to be the undoubted result of procreation, the vicious propensities of the ancestors being entailed on the posterity by a statute more inviolable than the obnoxious law of heritage that stains the statute-book of Britain. And without adverting to the ten thousand sources of depravity that diffuse their pestilential influence through every avenue of society, parental affection (one of the most amiable qualities of the human mind) is actually converted into a prolific spring of incalculable misery. This natural feeling being too frequently conducted on false principles, is carried to excess in conceding every species of indulgence to the wayward youth, and thus the primitive symptoms of vice are unchecked; and the inherent tendency to evil unrestrained, nay, fostered, extends its pernicious dominion over the rational empire, and renders every faculty of the mind subservient to its unhallowed control. From the fatal error of yielding full gratification to every infantile desire, arise covetousness, envy, revenge, with all the malign-

nant passions that in this fair world display their hydra form and grisly aspect, subversive of human happiness. The ruinous effects of this distempered affection, this misguided indulgence, often appear conspicuous in the juvenile character where no projenitive vice is apparent, and may, by a retrospective survey of the changeful stage of time, be distinctly traced through various scenes in the drama of life, up to the first unconscious innocent that lolled in the lap of its mother, sprawled on the parent earth, or prattled at the knee of an indulgent father. The primitives of mankind, influenced by a misconception of the celestial dignity of their offspring, he advanced in life under the full indulgence of every appetite, unrestrained in every wayward fancy, and unnurtured by the salutary rod that communicates wisdom ; hence the ungovernable temper, the impetuous fire of jealousy, whose disastrous result plunged his parents in the dark ocean of sorrow, and entailed despair, misery, and wretchedness on his own subsequent existence. Under all such cases, or false infantile tuition, the evil bent of the mind acquires a strength and enlargement which can never be reduced, except by the interposition of superhuman influence. And, in conclusion, it is again affirmed, that crime and cruelty in rational beings are not natural but acquired principles.

In infant hearts, wild weeds spontaneous rise,
That urge the pruning-knife with caution wise,
Ere rank exuberance mar the rich parterre,
And choke the flowers by Heaven implanted there ;
Depraved example, like pernicious weeds,
Diffuses far and wide its baleful seeds ;
Whence damning vice its rankling foliage spreads,
Immures the soul in death's impervious shades.

CHAPTER VI.

HAVING digressed from the subject introduced at the commencement of the preceding chapter, 'tis now deemed expedient to resume the topic, and exhibit the tradition in all its peculiar features. The tradition, as previously mooted, refers to certain notable events connected with the erection of the second luminous tower that ever reared its majestic head on the insulated Key of the Forth, and cheered the night-wrapt mariner whilst tossed and buffeted amid the foaming billows and furious rancour of the excited elements. In various districts of Scotland, such is the uniform similarity of name and designation amongst the inhabitants, that awkward blunders, tumultuous squabbles, and disruptions of friendship are the frequent results of this peculiarity. And at the period here referred to, so prevalent was the surname Brown in the burgh of Crail, that wherever three men appeared in one group, two of them invariably wore the title of this sombre hue. And although the distinct parochial situation of the Isle of May has been the subject of much antiquarian controversy, and still continues involved in dubiety, the principal intercourse was always with the port of Crail, in the vicinity of which the proprietor of the island resided. Accordingly, after the meeting of Estates in Edinburgh had resolved on erecting this lighthouse and taxing the maritime commerce, the supervision of the work was committed to the proprietor; and Andrew Brown, an ingenious architect, whose personal appearance and suavity of manners had peculiarly ingratiated him into the favour of the Mighties in the district, was appointed to carry out the plan to its ultimatum. Andrew, with all his ingenuity, was one of those light flexible substances the buoyancy of whose volatile

spirit rendered him easy of access, extremely vulnerable to the arrows of Cupid, and of course very apt to fall in love. Consequently he was seldom unfettered by the silken sinews of that pleasing, heart-soothing intercourse ; so susceptible, indeed, was his malleable soul to the soft whispers of the tender passion, and so irresistible were the witching smiles and winning glances of the last and loveliest creature, that his heart, like a mitred pluralist, was not unfrequently the willing captive, the entranced occupant, of several fair bosoms at once, like the sapient sovereign that wielded the ancient sceptre of the East. Under this constitutional warmth of feeling and comprehensive affection, he had exchanged hearts with three blooming nymphs whom he equally loved with unquenchable ardour. And, strange as it may appear, they were the progeny of three men wearing the identical name of John Brown, entirely free from the ties of consanguinity ; and their daughters, lovely and beloved, respectively answered to the name of Eliza. And, as is still manifested in a variety of instances, the maternal dames seemed extremely desirous of having their lassies admired and sweethearted. Each, of course, cherished the felicitous conception that her lassie was the darling object of Andrew's undivided affection, till an untoward event, emerging from the rayless entrenchment of destiny, plunged into the stream of enjoyment, and obstructed the smooth-flowing rivulet of prospective bliss. Andrew being now stationed on the little island, uprearing the masonic pile destined to illumine the darkness of subsequent ages, rushing waters, heaving billows, yawning perils, separated him from the fair objects of attraction. But yon speck, that sustains him in the midst of the ocean, looms sweet on the vision, and the portion of azure that forms his canopy seems the purest region of the heavens. And the lovely trio, sighing under the

ordeal of suspended bliss, would frequently render themselves visible on the 'vantage ground, erect as motionless statues, rolling their glistening eyes over the intervening waters; whilst (unknown to each other) one feeling glowed in their bosoms, and one subject of entrancing contemplation occupied the secret chambers of the heart. But though all hung with equal weight on the tender, the sympathetic cords of Andrew's affection, the parting embrace of the last-visited Eliza left the deepest impression on his fervent, love-bound heart. The rational soul, when glowing under the sweet influence of the tender passion, becomes the hallowed seat of feelings and emotions peculiar to itself. A singular principle continues in ceaseless operation, which no power of the fancy, no command of language, can adequately describe. But what intelligent existence tinged with the hue of age—what ingenious bosom, endued with the thrilling sensibilities of man, that with buoyant step has trod life's flowery path, which glows and basks in the sunshine of youth, can, like a novice in some cunning craft, declare his unacquaintance with the theme? Nay, do earth's fair climes a human prodigy sustain, whose ice-bound bosom, sterile as the regions of the frigid zone, involve a heart so utterly inflexible, so unsusceptible of the stealthy impress of love, as to render its delectable sensations illegible on the tablet of his experience—sensations which, coming in contact with the mazy turmoils and ravelled perplexities of life, like the touchstone of enchantment, change their nature and quality, and convert them into milder ingredients of a less repulsive character? Divested of those angellic sympathies, those social affections, those tender attachments that constitute the very zest of rational existence, then what were this world in its fairest clime, its loveliest aspect, its richest abodes? What but a heartless, a comfortless, a dreary solitude—a

scene of anxieties unsoothed, of cares unalleviated, of sorrows unsolaced by the balm of friendship. A globe teeming with life, and yet as inhabited by one desolate being. But why dilate? Who has not experienced the thrilling transport of lovers' meetings, the ardour of the severing embrace, and the perturbation of absence? All were amply realized by the fair, the love-bound trio in the burgh of Crail. But in every instance where intervening space, by stern decree, precludes a personal reciprocity of feeling, the very name of the loved, the admired object transpiring in conversation, infuses a glow of fervour into the lover's bosom unknown, unfelt by all besides. And when blest with the receipt of a *billet*, what entrancing ecstacy shivers through the veins! What transcendant sublimity of feeling, what a plenitude of delight, what swelling emotions exercise a nameless influence on every cord of sympathy, every spring of action, every affection of the soul! Actuated by a conscious belief that the noiseless ambassador conveys in its snowy bosom the sentiments of a being in whose breast the heart of the receiver is lodged, assumes the fancied image of the writer, and becomes an object of veneration little inferior to a Brahmin pagoda. And oft, irrespective of aught sublime involved in the artful folds of love's silent representative, the fragile element itself is with care caressed, with ardour embraced, and embosomed in the closest vicinity of the heart. Nay, though the blest custodier be wholly incapable of deciphering a single sentiment expressed in the half-deified scrap, yet, in the pleasing moments of retirement and dulcet reflection, it is joyously unfolded and apparently perused with ineffable delight, and to wrench it from the grasp of the happy possessor were tantamount to dislodging the heart from its secret entrenchment. Truly, were the hallowed Record of Celestial Love but half as much revered, did it exert but half the influence over

the heart, the feelings, the affections of all its participants, how inconceivably grand and glorious were the result ! The horrific demon of human misery, that in a thousand hideous forms stalks with giant stride over the length and breadth of the peopled universe, would dwindle into a mere nonentity, and vanish like a shadow when the substance is removed ; for man, the sole enemy of man, would merge his hostility in the peaceful exercise of unmingled philanthropy.

But in this ravelled scene of existence teeming with vicissitudes, every diurnal revolution of the great globe, every successive exhibition of the grand central orb burning in glory, discloses a fraction of futurity, reveals some novel events, and tells a tale unknown. And although the surrounding objects of nature may present to the daily observer no apparent alteration, yet the orient sun never illumines the identical objects that glowed beneath his setting beams, and glittered in the dewy perils of evening. A distinct similarity of features may still ensure a perfect recognition ; but as there is no suspension in the operations of nature, the total cessation of time's machinery and the abolition of the powers and principles of inherent mutation, must be coeval. Rapt in sweet reflections on the past, and soul-transporting anticipations of the full fruition of their hopes, the three captives of Cupid, warpt in the silken chains of love, having spent fourteen days recounting past endearments, and so many nights blest with the honeyed visions that incessantly watch the lover's pillow, they began to feel the bitter pangs of disappointment, as no tidings had arrived from the island. The first month of summer had now mingled itself with the vanished ages of the past. The early dawn put forth the gorgeous aurora, diffusing spangles of gold, which, merging from the German Ocean in rich magnificence and sublime grandeur, invades the silent

empire of rayless majesty, dissolves the transient reign of nocturnal gloom, and heralds the triumphant ascent of the flaming monarch of day in all his dazzling radiance. Seldom does he wield his burning sceptre over a fraction of time more pregnant with prospective delight, than the near approach of this day inspired in the East Nook. It was indeed a gala to which all peeped through the veil of futurity with joyous contemplation and feelings of bounding transport. The couthy gudeman, in the hoary autumn of age, strid over the furrows with renewed vivacity, as he indulged the fond hope of recalling the days of his youth. To the plodding hind, ready to faint with exhaustion, the anticipation imparted a fresh impetus to his movements, and a more vigorous tone to his rustic notes, as he whistled along to cheer and encourage his weary team. The goadsman, engrossed with the fun that still slumbered in fancy, forgot the names of his cattle, and oft exclaimed "Tyesday" when no such title existed among them. The blooming beauties of the town, just emerging from the seventh round of their precarious teens, with love laughing in their eyes, and the rosy blossom of health mantling their cheeks, soared high on the eagle pinions of imagination; cherishing with blithe-some heart the mirthful prospect as it glimmered through the haze of the morrow, they drank deep in the nectarean cup of enjoyment, while yet apart from their lips, birring at their spinning-jennies,* and like the bees on the blossom, drawing their aliment from the towie tuft that heaved its shaggy head before them, and in which they sometimes hid love's blushes; and while nursing the gala in their bosom, the simple machinery revolved with

* According to an ancient statistical account of the burgh of Crail, there were at this period upwards of three hundred spinning-wheels in full birring operation within the royalty.

accelerated motion, the beams of delight sparkled in their visual organs, an involuntary smile of satisfaction played on their visage, and the gleesome thought oft exceeding the limits of its province, transpired in audible sounds. In short, the bright anticipation of this forthcoming event exerted an irresistible influence over the entire length and breadth of the parish ; swaying a sceptre of absolute control over the risible faculties, the social affections of every rational grade, from the strutting laird wielding his Indian bamboo surmounted with gold, down to the duddie urchin exhibiting his emblems of poverty fluttering in the breeze ; and again from the sedate matron complexionally sombre, to the giddy rantipoll chanting her artless sonnet as she twirled at the distaff. Now, what mighty cause has produced this internal transport, so extensively diffused ? What brilliant prodigy is the dawn of June destined to develope ? Is the Forth to be swallowed up in the great reservoir, disclosing the latent channels of the dark deep, and revealing the ten thousand secrets that lurk in the caverns of the ocean ? Or, according to some wild astrologic prediction, are the flimsy clouds, that float in towering majesty through the lofty regions of ether, to undergo, by some mysterious interposition, a thorough change in their components, and shower down on that locality a boundless profusion of gold and silver, gems and pearls, with all the precious jewels that ever sparkled in the light of heaven, amid the dazzling glare of oriental splendour ? And was the sun of this auspicious day to witness the burgh of Crail reject its humble guise, emerge from the vale of obscurity, and assume the fame, the riches, the gorgeous magnificence, that distinguished the capital of Judea, when, based on the golden mountain of prosperity, she shone in the zenith of her glory ? No. That fleet-winged portion of time is destined to exhibit no such astounding events,

no such miraculous manifestations, no such elemental rebellion against the immutable laws of antiquated nature. The grand forthcoming event, whose precursing shadows had converted every bosom into a paradise of prospective transport, and deluged every heart with imaginary bliss, was the novel celebration of a public wedding on the Castle green. As a general invitation to the entire parish had been previously tendered by tuck of drum, the affair came pledged with all the boisterous merriment, and innocent pleasantry ever characteristic of the good olden time, even while held *in retentis* by the dark cloud of futurity. But, like other terrestrial enjoyments, it is highly probable that the mere image, reflected by the mirror of anticipation, shone with more vivid lustre than the unveiled reality. The beings who figured most prominent in this drama were two principal domestics in Balcombe Place, who had fully attained the age of discretion, each having nearly tripled a round score of Hansel-Mondays; and although certain features of eccentricity frequently developed themselves in the train of their deportment, their responsible situation and protracted servitude afford sufficient evidence that fidelity to their master was the governing balance that regulated all their motions. There is amongst dependants a sort of spurious fidelity prevalent in the world, and by which many holding places of trust are eminently distinguished. Being possessed of an officious, currying spirit, they ingeniously indulge it under the fallacious hope of ingratiating themselves more into the favour and confidence of their superior, however detrimental to others; whereas such sneaking conduct, in a variety of instances, operates with a reflex influence on the discerning mind of their master, and only accelerates their dismissal, and consequent wretchedness—for such deceptive policy renders them obnoxious in the estimation of

all within the limits of their locality, and when their misery, which lingereth not, arrives in all its grizzly array, they are doomed to endurance unpitied and unrelieved, Such, however, was not the policy pursued by our hopeful pair, now verging on the blessed confines of matrimonial felicity. A single-hearted principle of candour pervaded all their intercourse with society in every relation of life ; by which they acquired the confidence of their master, and conciliated the warmest affections of the entire district. And these esteemed minions having resolved, by a most important step in the rugged journey of life, to launch upon an ocean of delights or a sea of troubles (for the bridal bed is not always strewn with roses), the whole influentials in the parish were determined that in the consummation of their wishes there should be matter-o'-money, according to the pun of the old parson.

While the boundless creation of animate existence slumbered in the death-like stillness of repose, the ponderous spheres, in solemn silence wheeling their ceaseless round, hurled the present into the rayless void that engulfs the past, and summoned from the cloud-wrapt vale of futurity the notable day on which hung a thousand minds in panting suspense, and in which were involved a legion of bright expectations. The early warblers, assuming a more exalted elevation in the azure heavens, diffused their simple, soul-stirring melody in loftier strains of entranced rapture. The sun, emerging from the crystal flood, shone forth in all his pristine glory, as newly-kindled by the visual glance of Divinity. And as the stretching shadows that chequered the landscape gradually diminished in extent, the lively features of the gala began to exhibit themselves in all their genuine simplicity, and as unequivocally as ever did the warning prognostics of a gathering tempest. The risibly-affected groups, with apparent buoyancy of spirit, greeted each

other in joyous salutations; while no admixture of lengthened faces appeared to blend their shades in the brilliant prospect. Exalted on a mouldering turret of the Castle, stooping beneath the pressure of accumulated years, appeared the hymeneal standard,* proudly floating in the gentle zephyr that softly fanned the Forth's pellucid stream. This was the grand centre to which all the lines or avenues of the parish converged, the rallying-point whither the thickening crowds of merry mortals resorted apace, arrayed in all the unaffected show, the undazzling panoply of rustic elegance characteristic of that simple age, unfettered by the toils of refined etiquette, whilst their smirking features brightly responded to the thrilling vibrations of joyous emotion that shivered on every cord of the soul. The nether gate now presented one of the most brilliant spectacles of animation that even the wild conceptions of romantic fancy could possibly pourtray, the whole area being converted into a dense thicket of laughing, leaping, shouting humanity, an unshaken picture of real enjoyment; where, in lively contrast, appeared the trim blue bonnets intermingled with the threefold toys, all fair as the Alpine snow, just shaken from the frigid bosom of the air-borne cloud; and the wild strains of the pipe, mellowed by the distance, fell with electric impulse on every nerve, limb, and muscle of the vivid assemblage. For such is the influence of music on the animal spirits, that it rarely fails to exhilarate the gay, enliven the sedate, and even to kindle a glow of delight in the cold breast of phlegmatic melan-

* A flag or ensign embellished with many figurative representations, such as hands joined, hearts united, and other fanciful devices, all emblematic of the matrimonial union. This bridal concomitant has almost fallen into total desuetude, except amongst the seafaring population, who still maintain the practice, and preserve it from literally vanishing.

choly lowering under a cloud of the dismal. At this period, the Laird of Balcombie had a steward possessed of no ordinary gumption, whose real name was John or Johnny Household. On this accredited minion, dévolved the entire management of the whole unwieldy affair ; and an official, invested with similar authority, is still an indispensable requisite at all penny weddings. And whatever may be his proper designation, this transmitted title is conferred upon him in virtue of his office, and to which he promptly answers during the whole continuance of the festival. It may likewise be remarked, in passing, that through the dark ages of the past, down to the present era of light and logic, the aspect of the firmament on a nuptial day has ever been carefully observed, and solemnly regarded as emblematic of the subsequent condition of the parties. Accordingly, the bright effulgence of the sun, blazing amid the unchequered serenity of the heavens, exhibits a perfect picture of unshaded prosperity, unsoured love, and unmarred felicity, fast ripening for them in the rich luxuriance of the groves of Hymen. The troubled elements, the frowning clouds, the bursting tempest spending its ruthless ire on the trembling objects beneath, rocking the spires, dismantling the temples, and with desolating sweep disfiguring the aspect of nature — these distinctly emblemize the fell domestic brawls and scenes of matrimonial warfare that too frequently absorb the setting beams of the honeymoon ; whilst the lowering, deep-shaded canopy, distilling its exhaled treasures on the thirsty earth, prefigure the rending sorrows, the convulsing grief, the flowing tears that future days are destined to reveal. Thus, through a fathomless series of ages, have these imaginary prognostics sped the vista of futurity to the prying eyes of inquisitive mortals ; and in the humbler spheres of life, the superstitious fancy still holds their typical character,

divested of every shade of dubiety. And in consequence of these ominous contingencies, many a blooming bride, inspired with dread apprehensions, spends the nuptial day in pensive heaviness, conjuring up a grizzly host of bleak forebodings, well calculated to envelope in sombre gloom the most complexionally pleasant. Amid the vast variety of peculiar superstitions that are still in lively exercise on this coast, so tenacious, indeed, is the adherence of multitudes to these atmospheric signs and symbols, as forecast shadows of human destiny, that to effect a conviction of the absurdity of such a belief were no less impracticable than the transference of the Bass Rock to the middle of the great Atlantic — these fooleries, these deformed relics of antiquity, transmitted through the dark postern of benighted ages, however fraught with inconsolable disquietude and dismal preludes. On certain occasions they are the fruitful source of unmingled transport, unsullied delight, and joyous anticipations; and in the present instance, the smiling aspect of nature infused into every interested bosom a brilliant sample of these heart-stirring creations of fancy. The sun, in all his resplendent lustre, waded through the boundless azure unsullied with a cloud; and the whole elements, pure, placid, and serene, exhibited a lovely picture of slumbering innocence, affording a most enviable prospect to those whose matrimonial condition it infallibly presaged.

Dame Fancy wielding liege control,
By magic rears her gilded towers,
With bounding rapture fills the soul,
And strews life's rugged path with flowers.

Or haply by a sombre whim,
She wraps the soul in dismal shades,
Earth's regions all with spectres teem,
And wide the vale of misery spreads.

Amid the realms of changeful life,
How vast the mystic sphere she fills,
Where mortals wade in joy or grief,
In light or shade as Fancy wills !

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN a vacuum occurs in the regions of the atmosphere, the air from all quarters rushes with impetuosity to restore its equilibrium, then lulls into a peaceful slumber. When the mysterious impetus, communicated to the mighty ocean by the combined influence of the two great luminaries of heaven, has exhausted its power, the swelling waters cease to overflow the limits of their empire, and to deluge the territory of man. In like manner, the entire mass of privileged guests, shining in bridal attire, being now assembled in the castle-yard, the bustling throng and din some clamour that erewhile wrapt every passage thither, subsided into a transient calm. When the steward had completed his multifarious arrangements, the immense, the splendid, the joyous procession started on a mission of no less importance than that of conducting the bright expectants of bliss to the consummation of their hopes. This was not the work of a moment ; for then, as now, it was decidedly ominous of infelicity should a marriage procession pass the door of an ale-house without saying, “ Here’s luck !” and quaffing a horn of the landlady’s cheer. And the taking of bye-roads has ever been esteemed a fatal error, and as carefully avoided as the cautious mariner shuns the whirling influence of Maelstrum, or the rapids of Niagara. At this remote period of unaffected manners and ungarnished simplicity, ale-houses were not, as in the present age of gilded re-

finement and gorgeous rivalry, distinguished by gaudy sign-boards, foiled with gold, and in glaring grandeur throwing out their dazzling reflections on every passing figure of humanity that contemns the proffered regalement. The principal feature of distinction, by which these necessary evils existing in small towns, villages, or hamlets were pointed out, consisted of a handsome bundle of dried grass suspended over the door or other conspicuous part of the building; and such antique signals expressive of tavern entertainment continued to exhibit themselves, especially in the country, during the greater part of the eighteenth century, till they were finally abolished by the more stringent tenor of the excise regulations. As several of these tufty, uncouth symbols kythed themselves in the line of the procession, much agreeable detention was the unavoidable consequence, so that hours were imperceptibly expunged from the annals of time, being absorbed in the swelling ocean of transport, or wafted hence on the fleet pinions of enjoyment; whilst the distant hills, the adjacent forests, and the limpid waters, reflecting the azure of heaven, re-echoed afar the unfettered ebullitions of joy. But in this ecstatic multitude, whose every eye seems radiating the sunbeams of mirth, and dancing in the splendours of delight, is there no invidious demon of disquietude lurking in any bosom? Is there no prowling reptile coiling itself in the secret recesses of the heart, infusing its venom into the soul, and poisoning the springs of happiness? That's hard to be conceived in this jarring world of turbulent passions and incessant vicissitude; this spacious theatre of varied fiction; this land of enchantment, teeming with deceptive images, illusive phantoms, and every species of varnished deceit. The bridegroom, however, entranced with the near prospect of being indissolubly united to the object of his ardent affection, to all that is lovely in

his eyes throughout the boundless creation, conceals a gangrene in his breast, gnawing the bud of bliss, and checking the expanding blossom of his joy. In those days, the parson who presided over the marriage ceremony, uniformly claimed it as his alienable privilege to have a smack at the lips of the bride immediately after the performance of his official duties. As the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, so this regalement was rarely, if ever, omitted by the privileged ecclesiastic. Indeed, some of the ministers of the Church of Scotland, even at the present day, avail themselves of this their peculiar privilege. How this ancient practice, at once absurd, indecent, and unseemly, originated, or obtained a footing in this country, is not certainly known. Albeit, on the present occasion it was the fruitful source of deep inquietude to the bridegroom, who loved his bride with an ardour and vehemency peculiar to a light mind that has passed the meridian of life ; and he recoiled with horror from the harrowing thought, that his exclusive prerogative should be infringed even by the pious lip of a priest ; and having observed him wearing a smile of complacency above his sacerdotal bands, and panting, as he surmised, for the blissful crisis, the whole antipathies of his nature simultaneously mustered in dire rebellion. The harassing emotions of his soul became apparent in the expression of his visage, deeply mantled in a cloud of anxiety. The mingled mass of merry mortals, by whom he was now encircled within the ancient precincts of the royal fort, gazed with intense amazement on the hazy aspect he had recently assumed ; but though conjectures were as various as the beautiful tints of the iris, still the real cause of his dark looks was to all as mysterious as the power of enchantment. Even the parson of grey experience, lacking the Urim and Thummim, could by no means divine what gloomy spirit had usurped

possession of his breast, and hoisted the dingy ensign of sackcloth on the tower of delectables. In order to unravel the mystery, 'twas in vain that he rummaged every cell of his Levitical cranium in which a notion might be conceived, and sounded every peg on which the tattered remnant of a shrewd idea might be suspended ; in vain he ransacked the region of probabilities, and summoned thence a host of fancied casualties that might induce disquietude in the very centre of mirth and climax of enjoyment ; still, after all his philosophic enquiries, he passed the saddle over the right donkey, himself being the ostensible cause. This is not at all to be wondered at, for during the lengthened period of his bride-kissing career, no bridegroom, on the loftiest pinnacle of transport, ever scrupled to concede the bridal perquisite ; and no blushing bride, blooming in all her charms, ever scunnered at the clerical smoorick. Oft have the malignant whispers of slander dissolved the sacred bond of friendship ; oft severed the closest ties of consanguinity ; oft chilled the glowing fervour of affection, and commuted love's ardent flame into the dying embers of indifference, or the frigid sterility of aversion ; but in the present instance, no symptoms of such infernal agency could possibly be discovered, for the lover clung to his charming bride with the like tenacity as a bur adheres to a periwig, or a lampit to the flinty crag. But as Time, in her ceaseless revolutions, is ever and anon shedding a gleam in the vale of obscurity, and thereby expounding mysterious events, unfolding secret purposes, and disclosing strata-gems involved in night-wrapt designs ; so a transient space developed the hidden progenitor of that perplexing gloom, that, like a thundercloud, lowered on the frowning brow of disquietude. The parson having, with all due solemnity, wreathed the gordian knot, and completed the indissoluble union, now seized a huge fancy cake, re-

sembling an ordinary slab of pavement, and broke it over the bride's head, distributing the shattered fragments at random amongst the surrounding multitude. By this ceremonial act, the mere staff of life is understood to have acquired a peculiar species of mystical virtue, imparting to the captives of Cupid, as they slumber on the couch of repose, rich foretastes of enjoyment, indelectable visions of love's endearing intercourse; and all being governed by the influence of these superstitious impressions, it may well be conceived that such a scene of scrambling to secure a morsel of the enchanted bread now ensued, as effectually baffles all the power of language to describe. Scores of lads and lasses, jostled, tumbled, and capsized pile on pile, exhibited one motley mass of sprawling, disorganised materials; whilst heads, legs, and arms appeared mingled, blended, and interwoven in such glorious confusion, that the most discriminating eye would have blundered egregiously in any attempt to discover the trunks to whom they naturally belonged. Tremendous was the ordeal of screaming, laughing, and skirling, ere all had again collected their scattered limbs, so as to present distinct figures of rational beings; and after all this uproar, none complained of bruises save those who were unsuccessful in the campaign, and their most acute endurance lay in the griping twinges produced by the envenomed sting of disappointment. This ceremony of breaking the bread, although it has undergone some trifling alterations as to time and place, still continues in brilliant practice over all the coast. But amid all this uproarious competition for the enchanted bread, pray, where is the parson? for in no age of the world has the cloth ever been found absent during the division of good things. Just a little in the offing appears his reverence, with pimple-studded proboscis, deeply crimsoned with the dye of the vintage,

methodically folding and unfolding the portals of his mouth, all glowing with the prospect of having them associated with the honeyed lips of the bride. With the assumed freedom and frankness of a gadfly, he shakes hands with the loving couple on the threshold of bliss, and tenders them a rich profusion of delicate wishes, the usual prelude to the smacking benediction. Then clasping one arm around the fair neck of the bride, he — Ah! the uncertainty of man's brightest prospects! A flame of indignation flashed from the eyes of the bridegroom; his soul rose in a gust of terrific frenzy, and staving him off with as much civility as he possibly could muster, he furiously exclaimed, "Na, faith, an' be ma saul, I winna brook that, gang as it wull. Sae lang's I set a crown to the lift, nae frem'd lips sall stick a kiss on her mow; tent ye that." This he uttered with force in his words, and stern resolve in his looks. Now transpired the prime cause of the mysterious shade that lowered on his countenance, and the leech-like adherence with which he clung to his spouse, bidding defiance to the intervention of any tangible object. The parson looked elf-shot, having never before experienced such a repulse in the exercise of his pastoral duties. The unmarried clapped their hands with vehemence, and made the rocks resound with a shout tremendous; whilst the married looked aghast, staring with open mouth and expanded eyelids, as they inwardly deplored the untoward event and the reckless conduct of their neighbour, who was dooming his bride to a life of misery; for it was then sturdily believed that the happiness of every bride lay involved in the pastoral kiss, which was considered all spirit, however grossly conglomerated with flesh. A sturdy Highlander from beyond Culloden was by no means an unconcerned spectator at this eventful crisis. Every muscle of his visage was in motion, his eyes seemed

ready to leap from their sockets, every faculty of his body exhibited a restless agitation, and his naturally impetuous temper betrayed the ungovernable swellings of his soul. "The teevil's mercy ! The man's gane out o's head. I'll speak till him. Tonal, what say ye ?" And without waiting for answer, "Teevil, man, hae ye tint the hale string o' yer senses ? Ye're surely pewitcht, or perwarlockt, or peteevilt wi' some nae guid ; for yer face is proondin like a nor'-wast moon, an' yer een clowrin' out o' yer head like a heather prawnie frae the yont side o' the plue mountains, or an half-worrit kelpie frae the benner en' i' Fingal's dinsome cave. Ye're nae mair cumption than ye'd peen porn yesterday ; an' ye mean to tamfounder yer ponny wife, an' keep her frae the parson's plessin'. Put gin I were i' his coat, I'd let clam at her owr the knap o' yer thrapple." Here ensued a gaping, gazing, staring suspension of that mirthful excitement, that boisterous merriment, that erewhile peculiarly signalled the occasion. And the laird, quite in a risible mood, taking advantage of the bridegroom's known eccentricity of manner, encouraged the parson to adopt the Highlander's suggestion, and invade the fort by storm. His reverence, humorously enough, made several rather amusing circuits round the besieged citadel, as if reconnoitering the most tenable part of the garrison, during which the bridegroom, like a resolute sentinel under the penalties of martial law, maintained a most vigilant watch, guarding with special care the accessible point most likely to be attacked, till the athletic native of the hills, again losing all command of his temper, made another sally more extravagant than the first, exclaiming, "Prunstane, teevils ! Thunner and lightnin' ! Pe the creat Caletonian head o' Fingal, tho' I sud ket a turk i' ma wame, I'll crip 'im, if he were a cage o' teevils." So saying, he instantly pinioned the bridegroom, who, perceiving it in vain to

struggle against such fearful odds, in a stifled, half-smothered voice, cried, "Rin, Betty!" Betty, being newly married, promptly obeyed the behest of her lord; and the parson, indulging the lark, started in pursuit, walloping in his canonicals, and cutting a wonderfully-curiously figure, amid the ear-deafening, air-rending, rock-resounding cheers of the leathern-lunged, many-mouthed multitude. The difficulties, the anxieties, and turmoils commonly attendant on great adventures, are generally absorbed in their successful issue; so, in the present instance, if aught may be inferred from the satisfied air of the parson, after having imparted the smacking benediction, exhibiting himself at full length, he cast an affable glance of exulting triumph on the bridegroom, whose prompt response was couched in a wide-mouthed, self-complacent "Ha, ha, ha!" evidently implying that there was a whaup i' the raip, and all are not game that run in skins of fur.

In every age of the world, and in every peopled region under the bright canopy of heaven, beings have always existed in absolute thralldom to the governing influence of peculiar foibles, and in catering for the maintenance of these favourite creatures of fancy, every organ of the body and every faculty of the soul are frequently exerted to the last pitch of their energies; nay, severe privations are endured without a murmur, and the legitimate comforts of life are unsparingly sacrificed for their sake. Now, at this period there resided in the burgh of Crail a buxom, gawsie-faced wench, reported of easy virtue; she possessed an unconquerable predilection to appear at all public weddings to which she was invited, in a costume identical in hue, fashion, and texture with that of the bride; and when Betty fled at the behest of her husband, she plunged into the moving thicket of the bustling crowd, whilst the bridegroom followed her with the eyes of an eagle. Here, amid this dense moving mul-

titude, it was almost as impossible to single out a particular individual as to pick up a lost needle in the heart of a hay-rick. The parson, with the bridal benediction ready to drop from his glowing lips, likewise plunged into the mazy jungle of laughing humanity in pursuit of the fugitive bride and coming hap-hazard in contact with the odd wench of easy virtue, and perceiving in her the precise image of his game, he at once threw his grapplings around her, and by conferring three hearty smacks on her ruby lips, imparted a triple blessing. And as he retired, she exclaimed aloud, "Thank ye, sir; there's nae sayin' at ony time whar a blessin' may light." This operated on the bridegroom like a shock of electricity, and produced a tremendous explosion of his risible magazine just as he was freed from the trammels of the Highlander; and the parson, not aware of his mistake, looked unutterable amazement; while the yawning laughter became so loud and general, that a bushel of marbles might, with a trifling aim, have been popped down the expanded throats of the vast assembly. Thus was one bride, at this early period, utterly deprived of the priest's soul-comforting, lip-smacking benediction. But whatever misery overshadowed her subsequent life in consequence, tradition affords no information on the subject, and thus was severed the thread of the minister's bride-kissing career, though he enjoyed the privilege of lips as rosy and as well versant in the ancient scene.

But recurring to the desperate competition for dream-inducing fragments of the enchanted bread before mentioned, it may be remarked, that the architect's three Elizas, all warpt in the toils of love, particularly signalled themselves in the struggle that they might enjoy the nocturnal benefit of transporting visions. This fair triplet of blooming virgins, as introduced in a preceding chapter, were all animated by the same prospects, swayed by the

same passion, and influenced by the same feelings, all having their affections centred in one and the same object. But this circumstance was as closely concealed from each other, as the centre of the great globe is from the view of the scrutinizing geologist. And although the persevering activity manifested by them in the tossing, tumbling, smothering contest, would have been worthy of a nobler cause, only one retired from the scene of romantic confusion bearing the palm of victory, and enjoying the solace of an accomplished aim. But how soothing in this world of disappointment is the balm of genuine friendship! And this mysterious "cement of the soul" had long subsisted betwixt the three lovely admirers of the lighthouse architect. The achieved portion of the visionary cake was cautiously divided into three sections, observing carefully that each contained seven scars inflicted by the baker's prickle, without which it was destitute of its mystical virtue. But had the veil that envelopes the human mind been constructed of such transparent materials as to admit the prying glance of a fellow-mortal; had the transporting aims, the endearing purposes, the fond anticipations that in rapid succession revolved with glowing rapture in the mental cabinet, loomed but faintly on the vision; had each been able to penetrate into the bosom of the other, and descry her own beloved Andrew snugly ensconced in the warmest recess of the heart—what a violent disruption of every sacred bond, of every tie of friendship, would have instantly occurred; how would the flames of jealousy have burst forth in all their terrific majesty, and blazed with fury unquenchable, as ready to involve the love-bound trio in one dread catastrophe! For however stubborn the sympathetic ties that constitute the hallowed bond of friendly relation, no copartnership on amicable terms can possibly subsist in the soul-engrossing intercourse of

love. But deep in the shade of obscurity that enwraps the mystic region where thought revolves ; deeper and more impervious than the horror of tangible darkness that once threw its gloomy mantle over the sacred streams of the Nile ; and thoughts, like veins of precious ore, lie wrapt in secrecy profound until by deeds bewrayed or words revealed—therefore, no invidious spirit insinuated itself into the bosom of innocent pleasantry—no hapless rupture severed the friendly chain that linked the hearts of the loving trio ; but with hearts all glowing with delight, and bounding in grateful response to the thrilling vibrations of joy, they gazed with their laughing eyes on the mingled multitude of happy mortals. And since the hapless explosion of Pandora's fell casket, if ever the cares of life were expelled from the bosom of humanity, if ever the evil genius of the world sustained a temporary suspension of his malignant functions in any province of his wide domains, 'twas now on the Castle Green, where, soothed by the mellowing influence of the flagon, and enchanted by the spirit-stirring strains of the pipe, the blest fraternity of Scotia's rancy bairns, with light heart and elastic step, skipped and vaulted on the unbending earth, vested in a carpet of verdure, and destined ere long to be the scene of a very different exhibition.

How rugged soe'er be the journey of life
 To man in this curse-blighted world,
 Some glimpses absorb all the dew-drops of grief,
 Whilst care from his bosom is hurled.

Did the beings who dwell in the planets above
 Look down on this theatre of mirth,
 A prospect so gay would suffice to disprove
 That care has a footing on earth.

How bright or how shaded soe'er be the scene,
 How fraught with delight or with sorrow,
 Man, loathing the present, would peep thro' the screen,
 And gaze on the scenes of to-morrow.

But dark hangs the veil intercepting his view—
By Wisdom, all's secrecy there :
One peep thro' the curtain all hope might subdue,
And plunge in the depths of despair.

CHAPTER VIII.

Now the grand majestic orb, arrayed in stupendous glory and majesty sublime, performed his extensive circuit, dispensing a vital influence over the boundless creation. Now gradually retiring behind the bleak mountains, his gorgeous radiance, that erewhile repelled the sight by its dazzling effulgence, becomes extinguished in the shades of evening as they rapidly involve the pellucid sky. This change silently proclaims a jubilee to nature, repose to the exhausted faculties of industrious existence, refreshment to the sun-scorched herbage that mantles the earth, cools down the excitement of the merry dance, and winds up the sequel in the visions of slumber.

Behold, now, the three love-stricken Elizas, as, each secreted in her own chamber of retirement, and each blest in her own entrancing contemplations, their whole soul is transported to the little island, but two leagues apart ; while their corporal faculties, governed by an irresistible impulse, most curiously perform their functions. From her artless bosom, glowing with love and high-soaring hope, each withdraws the morsel of enchanted bread which she had carefully concealed there, as a pearl of inestimable value. The croozie is lighted up in a confounded deil-chased hurry, that by its faint glimmerings she may be enabled to complete with precision the spell-wrapt components of the dreaming battery. This peculiar species of incantation, most successful in procuring

the visions of Morpheus, depended on a cautious insertion of seven small pins into seven perforations in the fragment inflicted at random when the cake was compounded ; and these mystical numbers being multiplied together, represented in minutes the exact diurnal lapse of the moon and tide, in which concurrent events the marvellous enchantment was wholly involved. It must be observed, however, that with this curious dream-securing mystery there is associated no malignant purpose of witchcraft, no infernal cantrip, no secret invocation of satanic agency. The entire operation is suggested, prompted, guided, and governed, not by the black demon of revenge, but by the pure principle of love—a plant too sweet, too tender, and delicate to bud or expand in such scorching, such ungenial regions. Well, then, the pinning process, however difficult, is performed with patience, skill, and dexterity which the fervour of love could alone inspire ; and, despite the matchless abstraction of mind, ever teeming with blunders, not the least shadow of mistake discovered itself in the whole procedure. And why ? Because all had a distinct reference to Andrew, the exclusive object of all the affections. In every pore of the bread were descried his winning smiles, his killing glances, his sweet, irresistible aspect ; and in every pin therewith connected appeared his attractive image looming on the fanciful visions, large as life itself ; nay, the simple Morphean charm concentrated all the powers of the rational empire, commanded the immediate servitude, and controlled the entire physical energies ; the beauties, the grandeur, the treasure, the dazzling honours of the world are pursued, envied, admired, and courted by the more frigid hearts of the cool, calculating votaries of fame. But on the mind of Eliza, this revered morsel, this square inch of bread, comprehended the whole inviting world, the *magnum bonum* of existence. Therefore,

although the blundering hand of error may cast its chequering, its deforming shades over the wide, diversified aspect of creation, here no mistake could possibly stamp its invidious signet on a work that engaged the whole soul of the artist; indeed, that it should, folly itself could scarce conceive an idea more preposterous. The pinning process is executed with mathematical exactness, and the little mystic enchanter snugly deposited underneath the pillow where the head of the hopeful is destined to repose. Now, as no bulwarks are invulnerable, no position untenable by the diving, soaring fancy, let us peep through the visual boundary that conceals the internal secrets of the fair bosom all glowing with love. In this sequestered region is all that remains of nether paradise—a soothing balm for the festering wounds of sorrow; a shady umbrage to soften the scorching winds of anxiety; a glowing fervour to temper the Borean chill of disappointment. In such an asylum did primitive humanity find a solace for his woes under his forfeiture of glory and expulsion from bliss, and may still be pronounced man's purest elysium as he plods amid the scowling elements of time, the rugged crossways of life, the cares and turmoils of sublunary being. Behold! in this blest seclusion, sits the gay, the insinuating architect, enthroned in all the serene majesty of love, environed with a placid retinue of tender affections, and wielding a gorgeous sceptre of absolute dominion; and whilst his temples are encircled with a crowning wreath of delicate sympathies, interwoven with all the amiable feelings by Heaven implanted in the female bosom, he basks in a glorious galaxy of endearing smiles, divinely sweet. Such is the exalted, the felicitous position which the lover maintains in the faithful bosom of his love. But suffice it for the visions of fancy, and let things apparent supersede the invisible. The blooming damsel, elevated on the

loftiest pinnacle of expectation, is all thrilling with impatience for the fondly-cherished visionary glimpse of the idol of her affections, and the delectable foretaste of matrimonial delight which the superstitious spell that lurks beneath the pillow is calculated to supply. But as the myrtle-grove is most lavish in its fragrant perfume when the sun veils his radiance beneath the horizon, so the mystic virtues of the spell lie dormant till the faculties that pinned it be suspended in sleep, and the throne of reason resigned to the wild imagination. By her own regardless hands, as if impelled by the grizzly grin of a spectre, she is suddenly disrobed of her best attire, which she recklessly throws aside, into what vile corner she heeds not ; for one darling aim absorbs her every thought, as the sun's transcendant glory dazzles for a time the whole planetary host into rayless insignificance. Now appear the emanations of mental absence in a curious catalogue of petty blunders. Just when reclining her head on the pillow, she discovers that the crowning tire, with all its gay profusion of knots and boughs and flaunting vagaries, is still in close connection with her brains. This must be carefully attended to, as it is the parting gift of Andrew. But, on again retiring, she perceives that the shoes and stockings still maintain an unshaken attachment to the polished limbs of their mistress : these being disposed of in a more summary manner, she hides her organs of vision in the curtains of nature, to invite the messenger of Morpheus, laden with nocturnal transports. But a distant well-known voice sounds in her ears, "Lassie, ye hinna blawn out the croozie." This was a most vexatious interruption, for the balmy shades of slumber were gathering thick around the motionless faculties, the cares of the world were receding from the region of the heart, and the sweet influences of the secret spell begun to diffuse themselves through the mysterious channels of the

imagination, and all was again chased and dispelled as the flimsy vapour vanishes before the glorious effulgence of the blazing sun. The plaguy glimmerings of the invidious torch are rapidly extinguished by a furious puff, and again she is muffled in the regions of repose. Again the drowsy god enwraps her dormant energies in his downy mantle, and invests her head with a wreath of poppies; again, in sweet tranquillity, she gently floats away on the soft, oblivious waters of the Lythean stream, whose placid murmur stills the tempests of life; and again the delusive fancy conducts her through the deep shaded vista to the confines of paradise. But where is paradise beneath the boundless concave of heaven? The prudent housewife, still wakeful and attentive to all those little offices that may tend to promote comfort or avert domestic calamity, again sends forth a sound from her dormitory like the cry of a city watchman—"Lassie, lassie, did ye pit the 'willie mealin' i' the door?" Half-aroused from her entrancing reverie, all glowing with delightful sensations, like the fabulous immortals in the Tempean vale, and unwilling to admit the mistake, her response is couched in a mere unintelligible hum or semi-groan. No such precaution was observed by the love-stricken Eliza—no "willie mealin'," whether animate or inanimate, found a momentary resting-place in any creek or corner of her memory. The door was merely hanging on the latch, affording easy access to whatever night-wrapt thief might have wished to indulge his plundering propensities. Howbeit, the duteous daughter, obsequious to the maternal call, starts from the blissful retirement in which she was ensconced, and speeds to correct the hapless omission; but amid the confused flurry, and the stammering stupefaction of broken slumber, she upsets the spinning-wheel with a dinsome crash; and the tufty tow rock, coming in contact with the blinking embers in the

grate, exhibits a sudden gleam like the bright electric flash when, in the zenith of night, it bursts from the sable bosom of the thundercloud. "Lassie, ye're makin' a light, an' a din, as gif ye waur settin' the hoose up—what i' the warlt are ye doin'?" "It's naething, mither, but the streamers through the winnock, an' the cat wantin' into the aumory. Iss, ye thief." Thus, love always finds a cloak in which to wrap its own eccentric progeny. Having secured the door, and rectified the disordered machinery of the shipwrecked wheel, she stands for a time like a dishevelled statue, with downcast eyes and sedate aspect, as if mustering all her strayed recollection into one focus, in order to ascertain whether aught of her duty yet remained unperformed; and having arrived at the happy conclusion that all was snug and tight and per-jink as a new-made pouch, she again deposits herself in the soporific vale. Exhausted with the gymnastic sports of the day, sleep hangs heavy on her eyelids, and in a transient space she is once more beyond the pale of the world and all its carping anxieties; luxuriating in bliss amid the sweet visions of love, she enjoys a transport "too exquisite to last."

Deceptive all earth's joys, howe'er so pure,
And certainty itself is insecure.

Just as she was basking amid the sweets of a delightful harbour, portrayed by the pencil of imagination, and enjoying a rich profusion of Andrew's most endearing smiles and tender embraces, a voice, apparently far remote, again invades her ears, and disturbs the harmony of her soul: "Lassie, did ye pit the gatherin' coal i' the fire?" Shrouding her culpable neglect in a false affirmative, she stealthily leaves her couch in a half-torpid, half-conscious condition, and slips the coal cautiously into the water-pail, and left it to kindle in due time. So much for the performance of duties by a mere mechanical operation

ungoverned by the regulating power of the mind. And though one of these damsels has been selected as a specimen, strikingly similar was the predicament in which the whole three were placed, and much akin were the blunders that characterised their domestic management—all being pinioned by one object in the same cords of affection, and controlled by one irresistible impulse.

Now, another day springs into existence, augmenting the calendar of time; again, the sun, burning in the eastern skies, heaves his flaming rays athwart the azure deep, lulled into peaceful slumber by the soft embrace of the gentle zephyr; and industry again resumes the reins, and summons into vital energy all its suspended functions. Behold, the three enamoured damsels just emerging from their dreaming ordeal, scratching their locks, yawning fearfully, and rubbing their drowsy eyes but half-released from the trammels of sleep! In each fair visage, erewhile mantled in the smiles of love, bland and serene, appear the blank features, the hazy traces of bleak disappointment; whilst the dusky gloom, diffusing itself over the entire aspect, bewrays the fell forebodings of evil that perplex the soul. Seldom, indeed, do the visions of the night conclude their random sports without a sequel of bewildering confusion; and how pleasant soever may often be the opening scene of their inspiration, the result is generally fraught with miserable disquietude to all who attach an undue importance to the vague rambles of fancy; and now, as then, what crowds of happy mortals, entrenched in calm tranquillity, forsake their blest position by the wild insinuations of the disordered fancy, and speed apace to meet the storms of life that lurk in yonder vale unknown, unheard, unfelt. All human bliss beneath the pale beams of the moon shines brightest in the distance, and looms largest when shadowed forth in perspective. How did these fair bosoms heave with the

thrilling anticipations of delight while yet remote from fruition ; and now that the period of enjoyment has arrived and vanished, how utterly wretched has been the failure, if the external aspect be any criterion of the mind ! How quickly is the bright horizon of life overcast, the lucid star of joy immured in the frowns of a tempest, and the gorgeous constellation of entrancing images obscured and eclipsed by the deep shades of despondence ! Sad and dismal lowers the rueful gloom, that, like a Cyprean wreath, encircles every brow, as though a sweeping whirlwind, conceived in some extraneous region, wafted to their bosom the blackest leaves of the Sibyl's mystic productions, invidiously culled by some malignant genius from the volume of human destiny ; and all this overwhelming deluge of misery that, like an irresistible torrent, has swept the fair votaries of love into the gulf of unalleviated gloom, owes its existence to the fell visions of the night. As they slumbered on the pillow of repose, fair and lovely was the scene with which the errant imagination opened the marvellous drama ; but reckless of human comfort in the indulgence of the romantic freaks, the transporting outline seemed only intended to allure the fond fancy to gaze on the finished picture, replete with hideous deformity, a spectacle of horrid confusion, interspersed with a grinning profusion of grizzly figures, deep shades of melancholy, wreaths of weeping willow, and every conceivable object of terror blended together in wild disorder and terrific array ; whilst every faculty lay dormant in powerless prostration, and the governing principle of reason suspended from the exercise of her functions, and hurled from her throne of dominion in the rational empire, they beheld in a dream, and, lo ! a white deer came bounding over the placid waters of the Forth, and knelt before them in profound obeisance. Caught in the tangles of consternation, they gazed, wondered, and

admired, when, lo ! there appeared amid the shining antlers that towered in branches of gold, the lively bright image of the man in whom all their affections centred. Environed with a dazzling halo of splendour, diffusing, like the sun's refracted beams, an expansive radiance of circumambient glory, and his bland visage suffused with love's endearing smiles, he cast a glance of ineffable tenderness on the raptured beings, and sped in ecstasy to the blest embrace. Here, on a sudden, the great magician changed the bliss-inspiring scene, and behold there issued from a dark and dreary thicket behind them a ghastly detachment of apparitions, wearing the shape of humanity and exhibiting the aspect of furies. Struck with astounding amazement and paralysing terror, they essayed in vain to escape from the blood-freezing prospect. Rivetted to the earth, and borne down beneath a huge oppressive burden, no effort, however resolute, was adequate to effect a change of position. But immured in a region of dismay, appalled, aghast, and panting on the verge of suffocation, they moaned and struggled under the stifling pressure of incipient dissolution. Now rang in their ears the hoarse, tremendous voice of a lion, great, furious, and terrible, roaring and rustling in the jungle. The air rent, the earth trembled, the ocean heaved her billows, and the whole animate creation, dread-stricken, quaked with astonishment. A peal of stupendous thunder burst with terrific crash in the lofty regions of the atmosphere, and in awful majesty rolled in howling murmurs round the vast circuit of the black horizon ; the flirting family of aquatic origin that tenant the boundless domains of ether, affrighted, ceased their cheerful anthems, while scream, responsive scream, resounded wildly through the void expanse. Amid these dire convulsions of distracted nature, the grinning furies raved and yelled and stamped, displaying an attitude

of hideous menace, till, roused to the very climax of flaming rancour and tempestuous wrath, they sallied forth in dreadful array, wreaking their boisterous ire, their envenomed rage on the white deer, which, being instantly swallowed up, vanished without a trace to record its existence. Their fury thus expended and their wrath appeased, the goblins, like an exhausted hurricane, gradually lulled into pacific slumber. Now, fancy, in her wild fantastic freaks, suspends the impulse of the charm ; and for a transient space all is still, solemn, and profoundly silent as the chambers of the tomb ; then, by another resistless volition, another flourish of her magic rod, she lifts the curtain, and presents another scene to the ungoverned imagination. But such was the horror of unmingled darkness with which the whole theatre was replete, that no distinct figure was visibly reflected on the vision, save the angelic form of Andrew, glimmering faintly through the dusky veil of unchequered night ; but in this solitary object shone all that is lovely in the world, all that the soul desired, and all that the eye pursued in its devious wanderings through the deep tenebrious gloom. Not a sound from aught in creation descended on the ear ; even the twinkling leaves of the poplar dangled in stilly silence on their limber twigs, till, sudden as the bursting thunder rends the bosom of the cloud, roaring with awful grandeur and dread sublimity along the vault of heaven, a wrecking whirlwind from the void ethereal, sweeping with overwhelming fury over the sub-lunary world, the solid darkness fled before it like a feather on the wings of the tempest, disclosing the rugged aspect of nature dishevelled and jumbled in a chaos of unsightly disorder ; and in its rear rolled a stupendous billow of the ocean, lofty, large, and magnificent as the snow-clad Andes. It progressed with unchecked rapidity, carrying vengeance in its bosom, and bidding defiance to

every impeding obstacle, till it tumbled, and expanded, and deluged the universe. Yes; for Andrew had vanished in the devastating flood, and, to them, all that remained of the universe seemed a dreary void, a naked waste. As they sighed in their slumbers, and watered the pillow with their tears, behold! a grizzly spectre emerges from the centre of the earth, black and hideous as the demon of revenge, and, waving a sable ensign, softly advanced to the second and third Eliza, and whispered into their ears the accents of fiendish consolation; whilst the weeping genius of grief, bestrewing with cypress leaves the couch of the first Eliza, in gentle admonition, breathed experience sad of earth's deceptive bliss.

"Who builds on less than an immortal base,
Fond as he seems, condemns his joy to death."

Behold! in the twinkling of an eye, the drear necropolis, "the land of apparitions," with all its dumb array, its dark oblivion, its grassy hillocks, that mark the fell consequence of the forbidden tree, in full prospect opes on their distorted vision. As they surveyed this silent region of terror, ever associated with a host of gloomy apprehensions, a rumbling noise, a hollow murmur, ensued in the dark oblivious empire of death. One of those expressive hillocks—that ever strike the sensitive mind with reverential awe—suddenly rent asunder in the midst, and cast up the dust of slumbering generations, as Etna heaves its "globes of fire." Nor ceased the mysterious eruption till the cold funereal cell gave birth to a lady in full stature, wrapt and shrouded in pure sepulchral vesture. In the distance appeared a sauntering figure resembling the parson, wearing a rueful visage, apparently furrowed with disappointment; around his neck a serpent playfully twined its folds, and to his ear applied its mouth in a whispering attitude. And as he seemed

lingering by the verge of a frightful precipice, apparently suspended on the tenter-hooks of resolve, a huge dingy shade, tall and terrible, glided swiftly over the swelling tombs, and plunged him headlong into a gulf of foaming disorder that heaved and boiled in the vale beneath. Thence ascended a blazing column of appalling fire, towering with majestic horror into the boundless bosom of space. The sun, abashed by the dread magnificence, veiled his face, and retired from the gaze of mortals. Tossing and tumbling in the centre of the flame, appeared two distinct images of humanity, formed and attired like the last fair work of Heaven; while the shrieks of agonizing despair resounded through the wilds of ether. This climax of horror awoke the slumbering virgins, dissolved the spell, and restored the exercise of reason. But all immured, warped and entangled in a mazy jungle of perplexity respecting the import of the marvellous vision, maternal wisdom and experience are secretly consulted as to the interpretation. The first scene in the drama seemed easy of access to the wily matrons who had long studied and expounded the wild productions of fancy. For what else could the white deer imply but a letter speeding on its way from the luminous isle, fraught with delightful intelligence from the pluralist lover! But as the other features of the vision extended far beyond the grasp of their prophetic attainments, they were happily construed into the common hubbub that usually accompanies an unexpected marriage. And the blooming damsels, being naturally possessed of a cheerful temperament and peculiar buoyancy of spirit, a small section of time completely effaced the dire impression of horror from their love-inflated minds; and, resuming their wonted gaiety of disposition, blithsome aspect, and innocent pleasantry, their voices were again heard in the melody of song, beguiling the tedium that invariably clings to a ceaseless round of monotonous industry.

11

How sweet flow the strains, all unfettered and free,
Of the air-borne minstrels that warble above,
Or the light-hearted swain as he chants o'er the lee,
Or the maiden, whose bosom's all glowing with love !

Unguided by art, and by rule unconfined,
Pure nature's effusions by mode unreprest,
Like the wandering brook or the hill-fanning wind,
Flow the joyous emotions that stir in the breast.

CHAPTER IX.

As the great globe revolves on its axis, every successive revolution introduces a new period of time, and with it a host of events hitherto unknown and unconceived by the most fertile imagination—events as diversified in their nature and character as are the beings to whom they occur ; and, whatever be their quality, they never fail, in some quarter, to exert a potent influence over the various passions that exist in the human soul. And it is a fact of no rare occurrence, that the very event by which some are inspired with joyous feelings and transporting emotions of silent bliss, excites in others all the rancour of envenomed rage and fiendish revenge, operates on another class as the subject of wide-mouthed laughter and every symptom of extravagant mirth ; and such peculiar qualities are actually associated with the identical event that falls to be narrated in the present chapter.

Subsequent to the vision of the white deer, the person entrusted with the delivery of letters was every day watched by the fair subjects of Cupid with beating breast and eagle-eyed anxiety. Never in his peregrinations did he cast an unconscious glance towards their several dwellings without producing a gliff that no power of the

fancy can adequately describe ; and every time he passed infused a chilling damp of disappointment, that was only relieved by the cheering, heart-consoling principle of hope, which, on every day's failure, caught instant hold of the morrow—a principle incessantly extracting pearls from the dark mine of futurity, and embellishing the prospect of mortals with a train of gilded pictures and fascinating images, in boundless perspective. After a protracted ordeal of teasing, tantalizing suspense, during which every day seemed stretched to a triple extent of its ordinary limits, the blessed, the glorious, the eventful morning dawned in the orient skies with light and joy effulgent. But not to all. The being who enjoys the distinguished prerogative of distributing through the ancient burgh the sealed sentiments of distant hearts, is observed bending his fleet steps and directing his welcome visage towards the humble cottage, the ungarnished haunt of one of the eager expectants. Strutting in all the plenitude of his own self-conceived importance, and fancying himself the sole dispenser of happiness or misery, tranquillity or disquietude, throughout the entire bounds of the ancient locality, he assumes the dignity of an autocrat; and, having descried Eliza peeping through the casement, he exhibits a letter, with an inimitable flourish of his arm and a look of unutterable complacency. How welcome the look of the long-expected visitor ! She speeds to meet him, and receives with a thrill of ecstasy the precious billet.

At the period here referred to, comparatively few of the commonality were instructed in the valuable art of writing ; and therefore the majority were incompetent to decipher the contents of a written document. Hence, it may be reasonably inferred, that amongst the humble, the industrious classes of the community, paper correspondence was by no means extensive nor of frequent occur-

rence. But whenever any peculiar emergency, any extraordinary event, springing out of the common vicissitudes of life, rendered such indispensable, the confidential office of secretary, with all its distinguishing honours, profits, and immunities, was invariably conferred on the minister or the dominie. And although neither of these literary officials exacted any pecuniary reward for their services, yet any tangible manifestation of good sense, gratitude, or discretion displayed by the parishioners, in the shape of a plump, well-fledged howtowdie, a rich yellow roll from the dairy, or thiggum o' caller haddies, according to circumstances, always afforded pleasure, and met with a cordial reception. For, as stipends and salaries were regulated by the price of victual, they stood then at a much lower estimate than in subsequent ages; and a solatium for extraneous duties, if not always conferred, was uniformly expected. Indeed, some of the Established clergy were at that remote period so sparingly provided for, that they were reluctantly compelled by the stern decree of lawless necessity to strike the glorious ensign of moral dignity, to suppress the swellings of native independence, which was merely comprised in a fanciful shadow, and, friar-like, to assume the humble demeanour of genteel mendicity. And that very alternative which was had recourse to in the olden time to eke the deficiency of a limited benefice, has been adopted, even in the nineteenth century, by beneficed clergymen of penurious habits, whose income was more than double their expenditure. The catering predilections of the modern stipendiaries did not, it is true, like those of other sturdy beggars, manifest themselves by an open exhibition of the meal-pock, the tattered garments, the parti-coloured mantle of patchwork, and the piteous, whining accents of poverty; but, according to a more specious, a more dignified method, they presented their petitions by

expressing their unqualified admiration of every edible substance which the wandering vision incessantly conveyed to the covetous heart. And as this method powerfully obtained, both in the circles of pure liberality and vain ostentation, in every purveying excursion their huge pockets were invariably converted into the common receptacles of every species of provision. It may be remarked, however, that bachelors, maintaining the veriest shadow of an establishment, have ever been the most prone to indulge in the practice of this peculiar system of economy. By simply advertng to these curious facts, it is by no means intended to cast a disparaging shade over the favoured descendants of Levi, but merely to exhibit the debasing influence frequently exercised by the sordid principle of avarice over highly cultivated minds, so far as the letter of knowledge is concerned. Although the clergy of Scotland have long since ceased to be viewed as beings possessed of superhuman attributes, and regarded with that superstitious, nay, idolatrous veneration which has ever been the characteristic progeny of bewildered devotion, so long as they respect themselves they receive the rational homage, reverential esteem, and respectful deference of every enlightened community to which, by their rank and status in society, they are legitimately entitled. But waving this, let us resume the love-letter.

Behold, now, the gay, the cheerful, the beautiful Eliza, as she glides with elastic tread along the rugged pavement of the ancient burgh, unimproved since the departure of the royal presence—a fervent glow of realized hope animates her bosom, a smile of blissful satisfaction playfully curls on her visage, whilst her keen blue eyes are beaming and sparkling with inexpressible delight! Carefully secreted in her breast she wraps the half-deified billet, and in her apron a peace-offering for the dominie,

as a quietus for the excitement and irritation too often associated with scholastic turmoil ; for she possessed sagacity enough to discern that a gift was endowed with such inherent virtue. Solus in his spence (converted now-a-days into a parlour) she found the man of letters lolling in his elbow-chair, after a teasing routine of fruitless efforts to strike a ray of light through the dark impervious skulls of refractory urchins. Having paved the way with the presentation, she found him comparatively easy of access ; and, preferring her request, she handed him the letter to decipher its contents—a privilege which no breathing mortal besides had ever been permitted to enjoy. As Andrew's other two Elizas were exalted on a pinnacle of expectation no less elevated, and their ceaseless enquiries after post communications no less eager, each was speedily apprized that a letter, having her name emblazoned on its front, had just been erroneously delivered. The hue and cry instantaneously burst forth, as if the entire burgh had been in flames from the one extremity to the other—from the Royal Castle to the mill-dam ; and scarce had the dominie finished the thrilling preface—"My Dear Eliza," when, like a rapid torrent, subduing every obstacle, in rushed the other two lovers, each seconded by her mother—each in breathless haste and alternately exclaiming—"Whaur's my letter?" "Whaur the wuddie's my lassie's letter?" By this unceremonious intrusion, the nonplused dominie was thrown into an odd dilemma, and looked aghast ; and as they carried with them no gift save that of tongues, he could by no means divine the purport of their mission. As he sat, astonished in pensive stupor, like an isolated cliff in the ocean, and the foaming tempest raging around him—spending still, and still increasing—the mother of the first Eliza plunged haphazard into the midst of the boisterous jungle of conflicting vocables, whose forcible

eloquence proved no inconsiderable acquisition to the uproarious group. Located in a region of stupifying, deafening clamour, with the lawless, ungovernable members of half-a-dozen women now clashing about his ears, let any hapless wight, indissolubly joined to a termigant, decide whether this was a pleasant, an enviable position even for a man inured to the ceaseless ordeal of seminarian din. "Silence! silence!" exclaims the dominie, with a voice of commanding emphasis, but exclaims in vain; whilst his right hand, as if guided by some instinctive impulse, made frequent involuntary plunges into the yawning pouch of his justie-coat, the usual receptacle of the tawse, an instrument that rarely failed in suppressing every insurrectionary movement that occurred in the sphere of his arduous duties; and it was with difficulty that he mustered so much self-command as to forbear its liberal exercise. As the furious gust was sudden as the dread explosion of a surcharged thundercloud, the whole faculties of his soul were surprised out of joint, and jumbled into one chaotic mass; and before he was competent to concert any decisive measure, a considerable period of time insensibly revolved while he was busily engaged in rubbing up his brains, collecting his scattered ideas, and adjusting the deranged functions of his cranium. Perceiving, at length, amidst the scowl of the surrounding atmosphere, and the impetuous torrent of vocal elements, that some real or fancied mistake in the delivery of the letter formed the sole bone of contention, he supposed that by a reference to the address a reconciliation might be easily effected; and although the interior of his pate still continued a scene of buzzing confusion, as if his skull had been converted into a bee's scap, the raging tumult having partially subsided, he throws the one leg over the other, and assumes the mediatorial office. "Whiest, now," says he,

“till I look narrowly into this awkward affair. Well (addressing himself to the virgin that brought him the gift), what’s your Christian name?” She answered, “Eliza Brown.” “That’s my name.” “That’s my name,” responded the other two, with vehemence. “Ay,” cried the matrons, “Nae’casion to houd it. ’Tis as weel paid for as her’s, an’ nae less wordie o’t.” Thus the dominie’s first attempt to solve the problem utterly failed. But he had yet another rule in reserve by which he hoped to accomplish it. “To the care of John Brown,” says the man of letters. “Pray, what connection have ye with him?” “He’s my father,” exclaimed three lovely mouths in one instant, which involved the dominie in a deeper labyrinth of perplexity than ever. And each of the maternal dames, seconding her own daughter’s motion, followed up with—“Ay, lassie, you’re right. That’s as sure’s a weaver’s knot. My certy there’s nae doubt o’ that.” The dominie being seized by certain misgivings respecting this rare coincidence, betook himself to the cross-examination of the matrons, to elicit, if possible, some more light upon the subject. “Ye needna waste yer wind, sir,” said the first, “speerin’ ony mair about my man’s name, for I’ve kent him this thretty year, an’ I never heard him get ony ither ca’ but John Brown, or carritty pow; an’ the letter can belang to nae ither buddie but my lassie, be what it wull.” At this crisis, the frowning presages of a storm appeared accumulating with fearful rapidity on the brows of the other two. Their eyes reeled, lips quivered, nerves shook, and the entire physical system thrown into violent agitation, bewrayed a virulent host of internal emotions; while, with grinning vengeance, all the tangles of control were rent asunder by a furious gust of envenomed passion. “What! ye impirrent slut, if ye say sae, I’ll set my fit upo’ the neck o’ ye, as I wull, an’ tak’ the ill-faur’d life o’ ye. Is na

my man's name John Brown—ay, an' his faither afore 'im, an' I watna how many mair o' his forbears? Nae buddie wi' an e'e i' their head will ca' my bairn a bastard, for she's just her faither's born picture; an' if curly pow, sir, be on that letter, ye'll ken wham to gie it till, for she get's that name as an heirscape o' her faither; an' I was a haill towmond in his aught or e'er she was seen, as I was; an' the letter's as sure my lassie's as the sark upon her back, that she span wi' her ain hands, as it is. An' mair betaikin', I'll daur the face o' brass to say, black's the e'e o' her head, or pit a foul finger on that letter, as I wull. Tent ye a' that, or ye'll dree the pine o't. Ay, what a stock o' impirrence!" Now was the excitement of the third matron wrought up beyond the extreme pitch of endurance, and but for the safety-valve, her whole rational machinery might have been involved in one dread catastrophe. "What!" she exclaimed, with terrific fury, "whether my face be brass or iron, 'tis just as God made it; an' I'll let ye ken." Here ensued a desperate wordy warfare, a tumultuous commotion, a jostling, uproarious hubbub, in which tempest the dominie's throne was cap-sized, and its literary occupant thrown upon his beam-ends, like a shipwrecked hulk in the foaming surf. This untoward event was purely accidental, but like oil poured upon the troubled waters, it proved an effectual quietus. For, in consequence of the fall, a letter parted connection with his person unobserved by any save the most furious of the matrons, who snatched it with shark-like avidity, and forthwith made sail for the manse, followed by her daughter. Cherishing a sturdy, unhesitating belief that she had effected a capture of the disputed document, how amazingly curious did the fiery flame of indignation that blazed in her visage appear, in beautiful contrast with the glowing flush of triumph! But the gorgeous pyramid of hope, the lofty tower of satisfaction, that her heated ima-

gination had upreared, was altogether an illusive phantom, a deceptive meteor, a flimsy shadow, based on the wind; and just as a beauteous star emerges above the horizon, exhibits a gleam of transient glory, and is suddenly quenched in the bosom of a cloud, so her brilliant hope inspired by the conquest only dawned to be eclipsed by the shades of disappointment. The dominie had been previously waited on by a respectable female, who had conceived some erroneous ideas concerning the federal relation in which Adam stood as the representative of his descendants, and could by no means perceive how his fall should entail misery on his whole posterity, and therefore requested a letter of introduction to the parson, in order to have that subject discussed in all its bearings. This epistle he had just finished ere his domicile became the Babel of tongues, and it was the same with which the infuriated matron had triumphantly eloped.

Now, peep for a moment into the manse, and observe the odd colloquy. She hands the letter to his reverence, who silently peruses its contents, and having transferred himself, as it were, to the garden of Eden, he proceeds: "Well, you're aware that man was placed in a glorious condition, and fell by some means from his high estate." "It's a' true, sir. Fu' weel I ken he fell; an' it's a pity it sud a happened; but I'd fain houp he'll be nae waur o't." "You're also aware what was the cause of his fall, and the confusion which it introduced into man's abode." "As ye say, sir, there was nae little confusion in his abode; but I kent naething about his fa' till I heard the din, an' saw 'im lyin' on his back, and the muckle chair aboon 'im. Sae dinna gang to think that I dang him our, whae'er sud hae the sin o' the mischanter." "These are rather peculiar metaphors in which you seem to indulge. But you certainly know that man's disobedience was the cause of his fall?" "I watna whethor or no; but

sin ye say sae, I doubt nae but ye may be right, considerin' a' the outs an' ins and ups and downs o't. But dinna mention meat-afores, for I downa brook a lee. There was neither meat-afores, nor drink-afores, nor aught foundit for ony creature to 'dulse in. But as ye seem to hae gotten ill milk frae some clashin' neebor, I'll tell ye't a' frae end to end, an' syne ye'll maybe come to mair understandin' about the man's fa'. Aweel, sir, d'ye see, that upsettin', daft cuttie, took it, whan she had nae mair business wi't than I hae wi' the kirk steeple, an' ran till 'im wi't, as there had been ten an' twenty boggles tuggin' at her tail. An' it kythes to me that he was as ripe's an August cherry to do her biddin', but I dinna like to wyte the man unwordily, for aiblins he wist na how she'd come be't." "Oh, yes, good woman, he knew all about it, and the mischief that would result from taking it. But go on." "Aweel, sir, ye've mair lore than I hae, an' sin' he took the thing frae the cuttie, weel kennin' that she had nae business wi't, I wat he's bauld to complain o' his fa', tho' I hae nae hand in't." "But you are well aware that it was a heavy fall, introducing fell disorder into the world, and spreading a withering curse over the beautiful creation." "Ye're right wi' the heavy fa', for it gaurt a' the grun shake; but he neither curst nor bann'd whan he fell, for aught that I ken. No, no—let the truth be aye tauld; but i' the middle o' the disorder ye speak o', I was dumbfounded whan I heard the fa', an' saw him wi' my lukkin' e'en, lyin' oot, head an' feet o' 'im, and walterin' below the chair, just like a half-worrit stot, by a' the world." The minister staring through the portals of a dilemma, thus responded: "Alas! poor woman! the miserable effects of the fall are deplorably manifest in your own person; you are raving in a state of wild delirium, utterly unconscious of the incalculable loss which you have individually sus-

tained by that calamitous event ; and I must wave this unprofitable interview, seeing that the latter end of it is even less satisfactory than its beginning—you still remain ignorant of your own loss by the fall.” “ Ay, ay, sir, an’ somebody tauld ye that I was a raven belduse ; forsooth, I took what belonged to my ain bairn. Nae matter, am nae that doutit about the kythins o’ the fa’ ; an’ the fiend a bit o’ me has tint sae mickle be’t as ye think. Ye’re unco weel versed i’ the letter end frae what ye say—an’ I’m blyde o’ that, for baith the beginnin’ an’ the end was about the letter ; an’ if he had ne’er fa’n, I ne’er had gotten ’t. Sae ye may whinge about the man’s fa’ as ye like, but if ony thing be tint be’t, it’s no tint to me, that I ween. Now, sir, hae done wi’ the caritches, an’ read my lassie’s letter, for she’s sittin’ here a’ in an unca fyke to ken what’s in’t.” “ O yes, my girl,” addressing himself to the virgin, “ hand it this way.” “ My mother gae ye’t, sir ; that’s it lyin’ upo’ yer thing there, at yer tither hand.” “ You are mistaken, there is no such thing here.” “ Preserve’s frae a’ skaith ! did ever mortal see sic a world ? it’s surely gane clean upside down sin I kent it. D’ye no see Liz Brown on’t there, my bairn’s ain christened name !” forcibly exclaimed the old lady. “ Be assured, good woman, the letter is clearly addressed to me without any mistake or ambiguity whatever.” “ I watna what kind o’ guity’s in’t ; but I believe the foul fiend frae the ill place is no free o’t, for he’s been ringin’ i’ the toon this aught days. But if I sud waird my sark I’ll see farther in’t ere I sleep. Come awa, lassie.”

This was in reality a move-offering most grateful to the ears, agreeable to the eyes, and acceptable to the soul of the parson, who, on account of her peculiar eccentricities of speech and demeanour, became seriously apprehensive of some dire, some furious manifestation of

moony-madness. But this was altogether a groundless apprehension ; for by reason of his solemn declaration respecting the address of the letter, a faint glimmering of conviction had dawned upon her mind, that she had actually been deceived in the tenor of her conquest—having caught the wrong sow by the ear ; and, therefore, it was under the irresistible impulse of a complex motive, inspired by the hapless blunder, that she so abruptly decamped from the manse, leaving its bewildered occupant in a labyrinth of puzzle and perplexity, such as he never experienced in all his curriculum. To him, her mysterious conduct seemed a wreath of intricacy, more difficult to unravel than the knot of Gordius ; and would have baffled the wisdom of the Eastern Magi, or resisted the sword of the great Alexander. But, in the midst of his perplexity, he resolved at length to visit the dominie, from whom he had received the introductory letter, as, haply, he might be able to shed a ray of light on the woman's mysterious ebullitions respecting the fall of man.

On the disastrous overturn of the dominie, there ensued a temporary suspension of the raving, roaring tempest. But it was only like the deceptive stillness that oft precedes the wrecking hurricane. The man of letters, having by some mechanical process, righted and recovered himself from the shipwrecked position in which he had been thrown by the tumultuous elements, resumed his throne with a visage as inflexibly stern as that of Cæsar Augustus when he taxed the whole world. His temper had been sufficiently tested, and he was now as irritable, as if, in a state of utter nudity, he had been involved in a waving thicket of nettles. Although a transient armistice may be observed betwixt hostile parties, as a matter of expediency, when victory is claimed by neither side, yet, while the identical cause of contention still rankles in all its virulence, corresponding effects

may be expected as a natural consequence. The love-letter tempest again burst forth with renewed fury and increasing violence ; whilst the jarring vocal machinery, raging, roaring, and creaking, poured a deafening torrent into the ears of the dominie, still tingling with the former onset. In vain he demanded silence in a voice of absolute authority, while his hand again plunged insensibly into the yawning repository of the tawse, as if to enforce obedience by a prompt infliction of corporeal punishment. He at length commanded the intruders to decamp, declaring, at the extreme pitch of his voice, that he was bound in honour to give the letter to none but the person from whom he received it. This so incensed the unsuccessful party, that a sally was instantly made on the other ; and in the twinkling of an eye, the entire group was embroiled in a desperate physical conflict. The antiquated tires were hurled from the hoary pates of the matrons, and recklessly trampled under foot ; and the fine scroll-work of the crisping-pin, that encircled the temples of the blooming virgins, was barbarously marred, tortured, and dishevelled. The inherent principle of waggery, whereof few men, however sullen or sedate, are wholly destitute, inclined him for some time to enjoy the militant scene with a feeling of peculiar complacency—all the while carefully watching the motion of the current, lest he should again be overwhelmed in the surf. But when the checkering streaks of crimson, produced by the ruthless talons, kythed in blending tinges amid the disordered features, he perceives that the love-warfare had reached a crisis that imperatively demanded his prompt interposition. Then, with instant resolve, impelled by an indignant feeling of insulted majesty that sinks all dread of consequences, he plunged into the midst of the raging vortex, and with the prowess of a Hannibal, severed the contending armies, ejected the

aggressive squadron, quelled the boisterous eruption, and restored tranquillity in his domicile. He then read the letter—the thrilling, the entrancing letter—all teeming with the softest, the sweetest, the most delicate expressions of love, and abounding with pledges of indissoluble fidelity; the whole being wound up, ratified, and confirmed by the precious, the endearing signature of Andrew Brown. Here was enjoyment well worth contending for, a conquest that amply compensated for the scratched cheeks, the dishevelled locks, the disruption of friendship, and all the other concomitants of warfare. The epistle is again deposited by Eliza within the inclosures of the unapproachable fortress, and secreted in close connection with the glowing confines of the heart; and having poured a deluge of blessings on the head of the dominie, she, with her mother, takes the broad way to the home of her father. But, ah! the uncertainty of all sublunary enjoyment! The expelled detachment, in order to accomplish their purpose, continued lurking in ambush, watching the movements of the happy pair, that they might take them by surprise, and ultimately effect a capture of the valuable document which was the copestone of all bliss, and the foundation of all misery; and just while rounding a quiet nook, they seized the favourable moment, sallied forth from their concealment, and pounced upon their game with a tiger's fury. Well knowing the situation of the letter, the forbidden territory was rudely invaded—when a struggle ensued that baffles all description; for to dislodge that letter was tantamount to dislodging the heart itself, and Eliza would part with the one as soon as with the other. Just at this critical juncture appeared the other detachment who had left the manse, so that there were again three parties, each contending for possession of the golden mountain; and such was the unparalleled tulzie, that the garments

were forcibly torn from their persons, the laws of decency set at defiance, and the love-letter rent into shreds, and wafted hither and thither on the wings of the wind. To the parties who were totally ignorant of its contents, this vengeful devastation imparted a gust of fiendish delight. But how very different were the emotions that struggled in the bosom of her who experienced the fell bereavement! Her breast heaved with the sobbings of sorrow, and the streams of grief flowed copiously from her glistening eyes, as she attempted in vain to collect and arrange the scattered fragments. Every portion of it, however small, was a dear, a sacred emblem of the writer; and all the disrespect with which it had been rudely treated, she held as inflicted on him. No marvel, then, that her very soul was ready to leap from its casement, and vanish forever in the regions of space. But there is a peculiar solace in revenge; and the sergeant of the town, attracted by the tumult, just arrived in time to note the assailants; and he, arrayed in all his catch-poll importance, assured her that they would speedily be brought to the bar of justice, and visited with condign punishment. Under this species of sorry consolation, mingling her sighs with the breath of heaven, she wandered home to add another to the sleepless nights to which the captives of love are often subjected.

How stately the bark with her full flowing sails,
In majesty roams the wide sea;
By the power of the rudder she conquers the gales,
And tends to the weather or lee.

But once of that governing sway she's bereft,
At random she's tossed by the blast;
To merciless billows, unguided, she's left,
And founders on shoals at the last.

And Heaven's fair work, blessed with reason to guide,
Can stem the rough ocean of life ;
And brave the cross current in time's rolling tide
Of care, and of sorrow, and strife.

But oft when the swellings of passion arise,
Dame Reason is drowned in the flood ;
The meek become brawlers, and foolish the wise,
And the decent disgustingly rude.

They reel, and they plunge, in the choleric foam,
Unguided by aught that's divine—
But rudder or compass, blindfolded they roam—
And shipwreck's the sequel in fine.

CHAPTER X.

THERE once was a period in the history of Scotland when the dominant spirit of feudalism wielded a sceptre of unlimited dominion over her glens and mountains, plains and forests, and rampant slavery stalked with a crest as bold as ever it exhibited in the wilds of Africa ; and from the days of Ossian to the eighteenth century, the instinctive love of freedom that glows in every Scotian breast, was chilled, and checked, and withered, by the frigid breath of tyranny. Every fawning sycophant that, through the mists of of debasing venality, had groped his way into the fickle realms of aristocratic favour, at once inhaled the contagious breath of despotism, and became in a manner tenfold more feudalised than his lord. Invested with a tinsel robe of delegated authority, flimsy as the cobweb, and instable as the vapour that flits across the heavens, such minions of unhallowed sway ever regarded their fellow-mortals as an inferior order of

beings, and as despicable insects only fit to wallow in the filth of the earth, or be exiled beyond the precincts of the visible creation. How wretched the condition of those whom the stern decrees of fate destined to bow beneath the iron sceptre, and implicitly yield the obedience of terror, to the capricious dictates of minds thus governed ! And the deeper and darker the cloud of ignorance that immures the soul, the more absolute the reign of pride, presumption, and despotism ; and the more inglorious the condition whence such beings are translated to a brighter eminence, the more susceptible they are of idolatrous homage and fawning servility. In every age of the world men have existed under the governing influence of peculiar dispositions, whether inherited from their progenitors or acquired by external contact ; and while they continue to revolve in their own orbit of native obscurity, these, though faintly visible in the common intercourse of life, are suppressed or circumscribed by a thousand contingencies ; but exalt them beyond the sphere apparently designed by nature for their operations, and the simple elements of utility are suddenly transformed into conspicuous objects of ridicule. An instance of this kind was brilliantly exemplified in the burgh of Crail, about the period referred to in the preceding chapter. A certain eccentric, with all his latent foibles, was, from the humble status of obscure plodding industry, elevated to the loftiest eminence of civic glory, and dignified with the title of provost. This marvellous promotion imparted a resistless impetus to the slumbering principle of vanity which, long suppressed, now heaved and swelled in his bosom like a mighty stupendous billow of the great Atlantic. Whatever were his literary attainments, he was by no means ignorant of the splendid pinnacle of glory on which he was exalted, and his own personal importance in consequence, insomuch that, in

examining and considering himself (a circumstance of too rare occurrence in the world), his thoughts would sometimes surpass the limits of their province and transpire in audible whispers—"Preserve me! what am I? But I've surely mista'en mysel'—this canna be me, for the very youngsters, whan they see me, rin cowerin' hame like hens in a rainy day. The auld folks lift their bannets when I gae by; even the minister himsel', guid honest man, taks haud o' the snout o' his hat, and says—"How d'ye do, Provost." Guides a', but this is a queer warlt. I'll get word about wi' the grit folks now, as I will. But I'se hae a crack wi' the minister, and get a len' o' some o' his muckle sharp-nebbit words, an' syne I'll speak like mysel' amang them." However full of his own majesty, by this resolve he manifested a degree of wisdom that might do honour to many coast provosts of the present day; for these dignitaries are frequently so dazzled with the splendours of their own glory as to shut out every impression of the incalculable advantage that uniformly results from mingling with superior society, or even to inspire doubt whether a thing of that name really exists in the world. As the East Nook provost was never in the least suspected of being inimical to a bicker of good nappie ale, acting upon this resolution, he drew largely on the minister's barrel, and likewise his vocabulary, by which he amused the wise and confounded the weak.

Now, it cannot possibly be supposed that so flagrant a violation of the King's peace, and the quiet of the burgh wherein the love-letter fell a victim to the rage and venom of the combatants, was to be overlooked by the sergeant, who possessed sagacity enough to perceive that in it there was grist to his own mill; and the provost was too sensible of his vast responsibility, and too replete with the majesty and importance of his office, to

allow such an uproarious affair to pass unpunished ; and as he had already proved himself a terror to evil-doers, all quaked under the summons, being brimful of dread apprehensions as to the final result. But one of the matrons, who was rather remarkable for her presence of mind in trying emergencies (an instance of which appeared in the seizure of the dominic's letter in the very heat of action), was not on this occasion wholly absorbed in the gloom of the future. With wily caution, she conveys to him a stately roll of highly presentable butter, shrewdly conceiving that it might have a tendency to mollify the rigid sterility of his heart, soften the rigour of the sentence, and cause the whole affair to slide smoothly through the clutches of his judgment. This species of philosophy he, in all probability, had acquired from observation and experience ; nor can any remain ignorant of it who direct their attention to the study of human nature, which, notwithstanding its innumerable grades of distinction, is identical in the main ; and through all its various degrees, from royalty itself to the humblest factorial minion, every age has proved that, however tenable its position may appear, it still has a vulnerable side, an accessible point. Gifts, concessions, and free-will offerings, are bombs that, long ere now, have effected great and mighty achievements ; and if judiciously applied, their inherent powers are still sufficient to move the bar and the wool-sack, the pulpit and the bench, the throne and the cuttie-stool. And if those strongholds be incompetent to resist the influence of such potent ammunition, it were extreme folly to imagine that the Provost of Crail was proof against such engines of attack.

Behold him now exalted on the bench, exhibiting all the civic dignity and stern deportment of a Roman Prætor ! His majestic mien appeared to inspire every

living substance with a shy retiring diffidence, save a huge fly that for a while buzzed about his ears, and then with audacious resolve perched itself on the rosy summit of his aquiline nose. Here sat the proud aspiring insect on its mountain of glory, as unmindful of its humble origin as aught pertaining to the beak that bore it. This afforded unspeakable uneasiness to the great official, and added much to the excitement of the irritable temper that imagined superiority of rank is ever apt to engender. He puffed and brushed, and became as restive as a spirited steed under the stinging ordeal of a swarm of famishing gad-flies. But the despicable annoyance still clung to his nose like an eagle to the carcase ; or, haply frayed from its vantage-ground by his violent gesticulations, it merely accomplished a buzzing circuit and resumed its dignified position. That a man so mighty in power should be disquieted by a cause so diminutive, may justly be considered one of the greatest wonders of this world. But he entertained a shrewd suspicion that this fly derived its existence from something else than the common source of such insects, on account of its unparalleled presumption ; and therefore construed it into a devilish incantation of one of the pannels at the bar, whom he always considered fully possessed of the witch-mark. His honour, who had been subjected to this peculiar species of annoyance during the whole investigation of the case, happened to cast a pacific glance on the suspected dame, in which she clearly perceived the soothing influence of the butter, when the huge fly was mysteriously transferred from the nose of the provost to that of the matron, on whom he was fully matured to inflict the pains and penalties of the law ; and being thus freed from the teasing, tickling annoyance of his tiny adversary, he delivered himself thus—"Aweel, sin ye see I hae 'vestigated the hail affair wi' nae little caution, I

maun now tell ye a' my termination to conflict persevere punishment on ye, that ithers may be interred frae the like omissions. Be this my incision; for I'm dissolved that a' sic like callie-shangies sall be impressed an' exhibited frae uproarin' the burgh o' Crail; an' as the minister says, sae lang as I wheel the spectre o' government, nane daur exist my 'thority, being regal prostitute o' the king; an' be his device, I'll kythe my bald dissolution wi' pith, an perfect extermination for the weel o' the burgh. An' I sud hae poonished the hale eternity o' ye for ramfeezlin' the lassie on the vera crown o' the cawsey, an' bambouzlin' her letter, wi' yer ill-faured flippers." At this instant the buzzing agent of purgatory makes seven circuits round his magisterial cranium, and again resumes its dignified position on the towering pinnacle of his nasal organ. He puffs, he fidges, he rubs his nose, and again catches hold of his subject. "But there's nae 'casion for me disgustin' the business ony longer, an' keepin' ye in dispense anent the incision. Now, tent ye, Jean Wickie, ye've kythed yersel to be a torious termagant, as the minister says, an' ye allenarly hae the wyte o' the hale resurrection, din, an' devilment, that befell yestreen at Sinkarie's Nook; an' for whilk outrage ye sall be fined to seven marks, an' twa groats mair forbye, to sanctify the sergeant. An' I demonish the lave o' ye to tak' gude tent that ye be nae mair complicated in ony sic graceless affair, lest ye come nae aff sae skaithless the neist time ye're extinguished wi' the honor o' compearin' at my tribunal." Jean, perceiving that the sentence savoured highly of partiality, began to turn over a few thoughts in her mind as she withdrew from the bar, such as—"Preserve me! what a jukery-paukery's i' this warlt; really it's an auld sayin' an' a true, that 'kissin' gangs by favour.'" These thoughts having audibly effected an entrance into the auricular organs of the provost, his

incensed soul exploded like a bombshell—"What ! Nane o' yere dispensations here, or I'll incastrate ye, an' pit yer feet i' the stocks, an' bring ye up the morn an' execute ye for contermashie ; sae ye'd better mind wha ye're speaking to, goodwife, and dispend yer dacity. Sae tent ye weel, luckie, an' keep yer animalversions to yersel' as lang's ye're i' the climates o' my tateritories, or ye'll aiblins get i' the clutches o' a mair doolfie mallie fammie." Here Jean, all terror-stricken, clearly descried the fire of vengeance kindling on his brow and bursting forth into flames of unquenchable rage, while piercing daggers of vengeful fury flashed like the vivid blaze of forked lightning from his huge rolling eyeballs ; and, lest she should be pursued and overtaken by a tempest of more wrecking severity, made the best of her way out of the civic arena, muttering as she went—"Hech ! hech ! it's nae easy matter for the warlt when the grun o' the gutter gets uppermost. There's nae little truth i' the byeword—' Nane ever saw a prouder nettle than out o' a midden head.'"

In this burghal court of judicature it was experimentally proved that there is much more virtue in butter than every one is aware of ; and whenever any public official appears obviously swerving from the straight line of rectitude, there is still a trite saying current in the East Nook, "He has gotten his loof cresht." Thus terminated the notable love-letter squabble, with all its ludicrous ramifications ; and though the Provost of Crail were to exhibit himself in the present age, with all his literary blunders, he would not, on that account, be distinguished as a singular existence ; for the world still teems with empty aspirants to talkative greatness, who abandon their native provincial dialect with which they are perfectly familiar, and without subjecting themselves to the drudgery of students by plodding through the rugged

avenues that lead to the seat of knowledge, just as a swallow catches flies, they adopt the language of every pompous orator without understanding either its import or application. Hence we hear of enthusiastic forests, supercilious mountains, sensitive rivers, impetuous rocks, and men of decent calamity. Extempore orators are sometimes observed to labour for appropriate language in which their ideas may be conveyed most clearly and forcibly to the listening audience; but the beings who are addicted to this peculiar species of pompous absurdity never experience any such inconvenience, for as every expression that comes uppermost appears to them sufficiently adapted to the subject, they round every period with amazing facility, and overcome every obstacle with ease and fluency. Therefore, within the precincts of the benighted orbit in which they commonly revolve, and where all is in sound, they shine like stars of the first magnitude; but when they exceed the limits of the dingy region in which their fictitious glory shines in all its effulgence, and plunge into a sphere of brighter illumination, how miserable, how utterly wretched, how ridiculous the exhibition! The first explosion strikes the auditors with a novel species of romantic astonishment; the second overwhelms the whole muscles of the countenance in risible confusion; and the third inspires a feeling of sympathy for the pitiable vanity, the majestic littleness of aspiring humanity.

'Twere wiser far, did nature kindly teach
To prize the fruit that basks in easy reach,
Nor swim in depths, nor soar in stumbling heights
In quest of glory 'mid bewildering lights.

Were the roll of destiny to be unfurled in which is described the diversified course of human life, and exposed in full prospect before the pilgrim, as he launches forth

amid the changeful scenery of time, a dread hesitation would usurp an absolute control over all his faculties; and he would shrink back from the adventure, sit down with folded hands at the vestibule, and expire in despondency. How would the rational soul, in countless instances, recoil at the first rueful glance of the repulsive picture? the expanded heavens with their luminous host, the rugged earth with its teeming variety of unstable objects, the boundless ocean with its ceaseless agitation, all present to the view an unbroken scene of never-ending vicissitude, an enchanted region of delusive shadows, where every fragrant rose involves its pricking brier, every cheering light its chequering shade, every honeyed sweet its envenomed sting. The joyous sun, ascending in a bright horizon of pellucid serenity, hangs out his dazzling lustre in all its pristine splendour and magnificence. But all is transient and illusive as the sudden, short-lived glare of a flitting meteor. The ponderous cloud, that wraps the thunder in its bosom, mars, in a trice, the gorgeous prospect; whilst the hurling tempest, expending its ruthless ire, shakes the elements of the wide creation, and the blest reminiscence of previous tranquillity only deepens the horror of the gloom. Again, a pleasant spot, resembling the refreshing oasis amid the sterility of the desert, presents its inviting aspect, bestrewn with flowers, perfumed with odours, and teeming with delights. Here one might be inclined to linger on his journey, and bask amid the sweets of enjoyment; but there is no halting. This contracted elysium is merely an alluring approach to a soul-teasing strait of perplexity, a dark and narrow vista beset with thorns, and where each advancing step encounters a rugged cliff, a hideous precipice, a yawning pit-fall, a roaring cataract, or a rending whirlwind. In union, all or by alternate course, these dire existences obtrude their gruff, ungainly pre-

sence on the bewildered senses, affrighting the vision, and astounding the ear. Thus entangled in a maze of difficulty and a labyrinth of care, he gropes his dreary way without one cheering ray, save the faint glimmerings of expiring hope, which, in countless instances, are finally extinguished by the insuperable pressure of the adverse elements; and the hapless pilgrim, tottering on the verge of a precipice, stumbles headlong into the gulf of destruction. Such is the repulsive aspect of the world, portrayed for multitudes in the volume of fate; such the rugged scenery that intercede the extremes of their mortal existence—an example of which appears in the ill-starred Eliza, crossed and thwarted in her fairest, her dearest prospects.

Retiring from the hall of judgment, with her lovely eyes expending their brightest glances on the callous earth, as if numbering the senseless bullets that sustained her feet, and whilst ruminating on the remorseless manner in which she had been bereaved of the highly-prized epistle, a slight feeling of peculiar satisfaction, the fiendish progeny of revenge, stirred in her bosom, when her rambling thoughts reverted to the pains and penalties inflicted on the main-spring of her sorrow. But transient, miserable, and thread-bare was the solace she derived from this unhallowed source; still, the grievous forfeiture of Andrew's image, expressed in the letter which was recklessly tortured, tattered, and exterminated by the hands of malignant envy, maintained the ascendant in her mind, and effectually poisoned every spring of enjoyment. But, whilst musing in sombre regret over the vanished shadow once so dear, behold what a grateful surprise! The reality itself, in the identical person of Andrew, flashed upon her humid vision just as his very self emerged from the coverture of the precipice that conceals the harbour, and with him a sprightly youth from

the Emerald Isle. How blest!—how transporting!—how ecstatic the instantaneous recognition! Her whole soul flashed in her eyes, as she threw at him a gorgeous garland of her sweetest, her blandest smiles. The intervening space rapidly dwindled into nothing, in consequence of the mutual attraction that operated in powerful concert, like the conjoint influence of the two great luminaries on the swelling waters of the ocean. What a glorious meeting! Even the gaze of a curious, an inquisitive world, to which they were exposed, was barely competent to restrain the rising ebullitions of love. What a sudden transition from the brooding gloom of symbolic bereavement to the bright fruition of the object emblemized! What a strange reverse in the tendency of all the springs of action—of all the emotions of the soul—of all the streaming currents of passion, must this entrancing surprise have effected in the lovely bosom of the fair! Such a reflex motion of all the intellectual machinery not unfrequently induces delirium, or a sudden disruption of life's attenuated cord; but, on the present occasion, it was productive of no such hapless result. All glowing with inexpressible delight, she conducts the welcome stranger to the residence of her mother, where his presence, like the mystic spell of enchantment, converted every care into smiling joy.

Such is the activity of the busy, tattling bodies in all towns of inconsiderable extent, that every trivial occurrence is trumpeted from the one extreme to the other with telegraphic dispatch. So Andrew's visit, with its full intent and purport, pervaded all the ramifications of the burgh with thunderbolt velocity; for whilst one class of tattlers were prosecuting a busy inquiry into the nature and import of his mission, another, more fertile in conjecture, had the whole business, in every secret item, most punctually settled. Be therefore assured that the

other two Eliazs were neither ignorant of the matter, nor by any means comfortable under it. This will be no matter of wonderment to any who are experimentally acquainted with the irresistible influence which the tender passion exercises over the entire affection of the human heart—an influence that prompts its subjects even to condemn the grissly aspect of death. But, while subdued in every faculty, under the mortifying contemplation of neglected or despised love, they fell in fainting prostration beneath the heart-agonising twinges. The matrons, severally actuated by a spirit of vindictive wrath, sallied forth in eager pursuit of the faithless gallant, and catching a glimpse of him, with his Irish secretary, just bidding good-bye to his beloved Eliza, they oped their merciless mouths, like the crater of a huge volcano, and belched forth a flaming torrent of blackguardism that made his astounded ears tingle in grating vibrations through their whole marvellous machinery, till Pat, breaking through all the restraints of etiquette, exclaimed with fury, “Bad luck to you ; can’t you be easy ; and if you can’t, be as easy’s you can ; or, by the holy Saint Patrick ! I’ll stone you to death with bad halfpence, and sure I will !” Again, another fiery peal of triple-charged indignation rattled like a storm of brick-bats around the stranger’s din-tortured auriculars. “It’s a cryin’ sin, an’ a black burnin’ shame, to the filthy fallow to diddle ony honest man’s bairn in a way sic like. My lassie’s a’ bamboozled wi’ his fause, fraikin’, ill-faured tongüe ; for he has the wiles o’ the auld deil about ’im, there whaur he stands. My lassie’s a gaun to, like a pat’ll o’ partin’s i’ the het water ; an’ sud she pit awa hersel, whilk Heaven forfend ! ’twar nae ferlie to me ; an’ that ugly, glib-gabbit limmer there, peepin’ through the winnock, an’ flingin’ her gley’d een at ’im like a half-worrit ram, she’s at the boddom o’ the hale rumpus. But I’s e warrant she’ll see twa moons i’ the

lift that night she mak's her bridal bed wi' him." "Oh! a bloody end to you! Be jogging; or, by the holy poker of Dublin! I'll water the earth with your blood, sure; and so I will." The two firebrands, observing the sergeant gliding along in the distance, took leg-bail, dreading a renewed onset of the provost's weighty artillery; and Andrew, with his aide-de-camp, proceeded to instruct the dominie respecting the preliminaries of his union with the lovely Eliza—previous to which consummation, he returns to the island, to complete the luminous edifice according to contract.

Contemplate now the gay prospective bride,
Whose cheerful heart's a never-ending feast;
The hours in blest reflection onward glide,
Whilst sweet emotions stir within her breast.

The crowning day, with all its fancied bliss,
Shines through the veil that future time conceals;
With 'minished space proportioned joys increase,
As round the sphere with tardy motion wheels.

CHAPTER XI.

IN every quarter of the civilised world, very little research will be necessary in discovering the existence of rational beings, who are incessantly employed in adjusting, arranging, and settling every man's affairs except their own. And the restless, ever busy devotees of this peculiar species of charity, this officious benevolence, rarely experience a scarcity of fuel to impel the tattling machinery, or gratification for their insatiable propensity. And why? Because on every occasion, when a contingent lull of notable transpirations occurs in their province, presaging a

dearth of events wearing the stamp of genuine currency, they instantly have recourse to forgery, and counterfeit coin to supply the deficiency, and relieve their commercial embarrassment. Now, the whole circumstances connected with the love-letter tulzie, the unexpected visit of Andrew, the architect, and the unhappy condition of the two slighted love-lorn Elizas, having occupied the tongues and talents of the lame and lazy during a period of nine days, which usually completes the revolution of a country clash, the tattling peculiars were about to experience a drought in their resources, when, behold! a most remarkable event emerged from the dungeon of obscurity, burst through the dingy veil that obscures the unexplored regions of futurity, and traversed the parish of Crail with astounding aspect. Nor did this marvellous affair confine its wonder-exciting qualities within the precincts of this famous locality; but in a space of time, comparatively transient, were disseminated over the entire Kingdom of Fife, through the medium of pedlars and sturdy beggars, the most efficient vehicles of news at this remote period. Indeed, it may be affirmed without hesitation, that by means of these pedestrian couriers, the rural population of Scotland were, in a variety of instances, more conversant with distant occurrences during the ages that are past than they are at the present day. There is a tradition still extant on the east coast of Fife, which, like every other tradition, presents itself to the world wearing the untarnished mantle of veracity, and acting under a kindred impression, the mysterious blood-chilling circumstances therewith connected are here particularly narrated, according to the received version.

In the surly, cloud-stained month of November, the parish parson, by a fell decree of fate, was bereaved of his beautiful, his loving, his virtuous partner in life. A calamity whose magnitude none can estimate—a cup

whose bitter ingredients none can describe or adequately feel but those who have drunk it to the dregs—she, in the bloom and vigour of meridian life, without experiencing the forecast shadows and presages of the pale monarch, was hurled beyond the confines of time, and sudden as the transit of a fleeting meteor, the last fair work of Heaven and solace of care-worn man lay stretched a motionless image, a mere passive figure of humanity. The eyes of the dappled morn beheld her full of life, high in hope, and cheered with the brilliant prospect of a long, an unruffled flow of earthly enjoyment. The sombre shades of eve descended on all that remained of angelic sweetness, laid out in striking, in mournful display, and attired in the gay, the gloomy garniture of death. According to the prevalent practice of those times, females, immediately after the vital principle had parted connection with the material existence, were prepared for mingling with the silent assembly in the cold, the dark, the senseless region of funereal slumbers, by being arrayed in a full and complete dress of splendid apparel, like a blooming bride at the hymeneal altar. Thus habited in pure sepulchral vestments, the unconscious lady lay in state during four revolutions of the globe, in whose icy bosom she was about to be deposited until the whole should be enveloped in the devouring flames of a general conflagration. The manner of announcing a death, and summoning the funeral attendants, in this, as well as in several burghs on the East Coast, at the period here referred to, was rather peculiar and worthy of notice. The beadle perambulated the streets, carrying a bell in his hand, with which, at intervals, he produced a certain uniform sound previous to giving forth his proclamation, which he did with all the apparent sincerity of an archbishop. In this proclamation, either the deceased was named or the person to whom he or she was connected by particular affinity, as for example—

“A’ brethren an’ sisters—Ilk man an’ mither’s son—be this I lat ye wit that the minister’s spouse departit this life on the last Mununday o’ this week, an’ will be boorist the morn, at twal o’ the clock. Rest her sawl!”

The invitation being thus given in general terms, an immense concourse of every age and sex, whose pedestals were competent to sustain the bust, and impelled by every shade of motive, formed her motley escort to the drear, the lonesome province of graves, the grissly land of apparitions, and witnessed her consignment to the oblivious mansions of the tomb; and as the yawning grave, doleful and hideous, swallowed down its envied spoil, and closed its gloomy portals on the blest angel of benevolence, the fathers sighed, the mothers melted into tears, the weans grat as under the smarting influence of the soul-saving rod, and the adamantine sexton, feigning an accordance of sympathy, rubbed down with pitiless hand his “hard unmeaning face;” while the convulsive sobs and huge rolling tears of the inconsolable parson, bore evident testimony to the pungent sorrow, the heaving billows of grief that swelled in his bosom. During the entire celebration of the funeral obsequies, the elements lowered in frowning blackness; the sun, in all his meridian glory, was wrapt in dismal sackcloth; and the rain descended in gushing torrents, deluging the saturated earth and drenching the dolorous procession. This contingency, however, though fraught with annoyance to the living, was generally esteemed, at that period, a certain indication that the departed spirit had passed through the clouds to the regions of celestial bliss; and can it be believed that this romantic superstition still prevails to a considerable extent in many districts of enlightened Scotland? and the proverb is thus doggerelly expressed—

“Happy is the bride on whom the sun shines,
And blest is the dead on whom the cloud rains.”

Men of wisdom and superior talent, when brought under the subjugating power of love, sometimes display a considerable degree of weakness and folly ; and such was the parson's vehement affection and ardent attachment to his spouse, that the massy gold-ring that she wore while in life he would on no consideration suffer to be removed after death, but that she should carry it with her to the rayless empire of sullen forgetfulness. The sexton having been apprized of this rather singular circumstance, the dazzling radiance of the precious metal struck, with torturing glare, his insolvable eyes. The evil spirit of covetousness usurped an absolute sway over his callous affections, controlled his selfish feelings, and governed every pulsation of his sterile heart, cased in a panoply of steel. For twelve successive hours his groveling thoughts, like noxious vermin, prowled in the bottom of the grave where lurked the glittering spoil ; which, to possess, comprised the scope of his entire aim, the grand centre to which all his desires at once converged. Prompted by the evil genius, he reasoned thus with himself:—" Why should such costly ornaments be consigned to the darkness of the tomb, and lost for ever ? such were only made to be beheld and admired, and not to be locked in a coffin and immured in the earth. That portion of gold which can afford no pleasure, no delight, no gratification to the dead, may yet please and adorn the living beauties of creation, and benefit me, even my living self. As death has no need of it, and the grave requires it not, could there be robbery in a deed by which no one is injured ? All the precious gems, the glistening pearls, the heaps of gold, whose dazzling qualities constitute the prime source of human distinctions—all is ravaged from the earth by the plodding research of man, and the earth complains not. Why, then, should it grudge me that shining morsel ? and why do I halt and linger in seizing it ?"

Thus having reasoned himself into the clutches of resolve, the desperate scheme is projected, and provided with his professional apparatus, he speeds apace to its execution.

'Twas now the dark, the dreary, doleful hour of midnight, when all nature was hushed as the prostrate dead, over whose grassy tombs he stalked with stumbling stride. Only the night-blessed owl, whose blood-chilling screams, from the crannies of the lofty spire, resounding through the vault of heaven, convinced the callous vampire that ought existed in the world but himself. The convulsed air, with hollow intermitting gusts, raved amid the rustling foliage of the cheerless yew, and howled amongst the leaf-shedding branches of the bending elms that skirted the lonely theatre of mortality. Assailed by such ungracious sounds, in such a scene of awe-inspiring gloom, at such a season, ever fraught with ghastly apparitions and walking images of terror, he plies his implements with skill and might and ardour to unlock the fetters of the tomb. What but the height of philosophic courage, or the depth of brutish insensibility, could have sustained the mind under such circumstances, whose very contemplation strikes with appalling dread? Who but a being familiar with the trophies of death, and inured to walk amongst the shattered fragments, the mouldering wrecks of humanity, would not have felt a freezing sensation in all the avenues of life, and a universal quaking in every joint, nerve, and sinew of his physical system? But, as the deep-rooted, rock-bound island resists, unmoved, the dashing billows of the ocean, his heart, in its flinty, its impregnable fortress, remained unskaited by the arrows of terror that poured around him. Anon, in this dreary solitude, this cyprean province of "skulls and coffins, epitaphs and worms," behold him wrapt in the shades of impervious night, exerting all his corporeal energies, in harmonious response to the high-flown hope

which he cherished of earning a golden recompense ! Throughout the whole series of his grave servitude, never was the shovel more vigorously applied in finally disposing of its owner's species than it was in removing the once vital earth that covered the spouse of the bereaved parson, and immured the tempting treasure so eagerly pursued. The encumbrance rapidly vanished before the skill and strength of the stout-hearted, sturdy sexton ; he unscrews and lifts the decorated covering, and once more the eyes of man behold the prostrate image arrayed in her snowy vestments. With eager anxiety he gropes for the cold hand that bore the glittering prize ; and having disrobed it of the funeral glove, and selected the privileged finger, he resorts to violent measures in order to separate the massy ring from the swollen member to which it belonged, when, to his awful surprise—to his hair-stirring horror, the lady suddenly withdrew her hand from his iron grasp, and, in stifled accents, exclaimed, " Oh, alas ! " All panic-struck, like a petrified statue, thoughtless, speechless, and motionless, he stared aghast, fixed in the trammels of a dire dilemma. Never but once was unhappy man placed in a predicament so bewildering, so perplexing, so astounding. What could possibly be more alarming—what could inspire a feeling of deeper consternation than the sound of human voice issuing from the cold region of death—from the dark depths of the tomb ? No marvel though a scene so dread had scared the soul from its casement, and mingled his mortal fabric with the mouldering wrecks that tenanted the rayless mansions to which, without a sigh, he consigns his fellows. But, here, this appalling terror produced no such fatal result ; his suspended recollection speedily resumed its functions, and promptly suggested remedial measures for the trying emergency. Such, however, was the effect produced on his mind by very fear, that he

relinquished all hope of obtaining the prize for which he laboured ; and seizing the cover which lay close by, he proceeded with the utmost despatch to secure the turbulent member that broke through the stillness of that mute society amongst whom she had been but recently enrolled. But awaking from the trance, by whose mysterious influence life and consciousness had been totally suspended, she made a desperate struggle to resist the enclosure, and in the voice of supplication, earnestly implored him to spare her life, and she would never divulge the transaction. It is the opinion of some that people falling into a trance, with their eyes open, both see and hear, and are perfectly conversant with all that is going on in their presence, while every other faculty of the prostrate body is suspended in the stupor of death. If this opinion be founded on probability, then would she be perfectly acquainted with her situation, having been privy to the whole funeral arrangements discussed in her presence during the period that she lay in state. Be this as it may, the very being who, only a few hours before, bound her beneath a ponderous load into the heart of the earth, now recognising the well-known voice, not of a hideous spectre, but her very self, assists in relieving her from the narrow prison of gloomy horror, and raising her from the oblivious chambers of death to the land of light, life, and liberty. After being conducted beyond the precincts of the churchyard, she recovered a perfect recollection of every object around her ; and having wended her lonely way to the desolate home of her sorrowing husband, the glimmering stars now behold the sepulchral fugitive knocking at the gate of the manse. Though grief still is grief, whatever be the nature of its productive cause, yet it is as varied in shade, quality, and degree as are the sources whence it emanates ; and although this passion in general tends to banish slumber

from the eyelids of the sombre being who is under its dominion, yet there is a peculiar species of it, which, operating on certain lethargic constitutions, has a powerful tendency to induce profound sleep, as the result of a potent opiate. It appears to have been grief, endowed with this soporific quality, by which the mind of the bereaved parson was affected; for, on the marvellous return of his spouse from the sullen domains of forgetfulness, her knocking was loud and often repeated, as, thinly apparelled in the habiliments of the grave, she stood shivering in the bleak blast of November ere the sounds could penetrate the heavy ears of his reverence. Perseverance at length succeeded in breaking through the Morphean crust in which the parson was enveloped. The uncouth din, as it rung through the vacant lobby, and reverberated from one postern to another, fell on his ears like a dying peal of distant thunder; but so bewildered were his senses, so mystified by the hazy atmosphere of sleep in which he was involved, that he could arrive at no definite conclusion whence or what it was that invaded his slumber. As the noisy midnight ordeal still waxed louder and louder, he at last quits his couch, and scratching his haffets, yawning and rubbing his half-sealed eyes, stammers to his chamber-window in order to survey the coast. But when his glistening eye-balls lighted on the snow-white figure of a ghost, gliding backward and forward with silent tread, and knocking at his own door for admission, what convulsive fear!—what insuperable amazement!—what paralysing horror seized the fountain of life, and controlled the springs of action! Overwhelmed in a tempest of perturbation, how fluttered his soul, like a hampered bird struggling to escape from the cage of its confinement! while his quaking, trembling frame reeled on the dizzy precipice of life, ready to stumble into the dark gulf of invisible existence. At

this peculiar period, the genius of superstition exercised an unlimited sway over the reasoning faculties of man, under which a most romantic opinion existed, no less prevalent amongst the learned than the unlearned, that disembodied spirits, disquieted on account of unconfessed guilt or undivulged secrets, frequently returned from the land of apparitions and courted the converse of mortals, having no rest until the cause of their disquietude was revealed; and on all occasions, whenever such mysterious beings rendered themselves visible in any particular locality, it was the minister's exclusive prerogative to address those objects of terror in the name of Divinity, and afford them an opportunity of unbosoming the cause of their ceaseless, solitary wanderings, and so retire into the murky seclusion of Hades, and terminate their appalling visits to the land of vision. And many a runkled grannie is still possessed of an extensive catalogue of marvellous disclosures, purporting to have been made by ghosts, which are too absurd either to be remembered or recorded. One, however, may be given, as it is curious enough in its own way, and may be the means of deterring others in similar circumstances from indulging in such nefarious practices. The being kept a dairy while in this world, as we believe many one does on the same principles; and when she was transported to the vale of oblivion, she, like the patriarch's dove, could find no rest for the sole of her foot. Therefore, when the curtains of night involved the beautiful streaks of the landscape in one universal shade, the restless ghost, denuded of its mortal vestment, incessantly haunted the very theatre where she usually figured in the drama of life, diffusing terror and dismay over the entire neighbourhood, and chasing home the night-wanderer, pale and trembling, with bristled hairs, stubborn as the quills of a porcupine, and suffused, as it were, with the cold sweat of death. But the minister having been

applied to, reluctantly undertook the unpleasant task of speaking to the ghost, from whose quivering lips, in dread unearthly accents, issued the cause of disquietude in the following words, then vanished for ever :

“The watered milk, and light pund stane,
They gar me wander here my lane.”

Such is the peculiar gossip with which many old matrons, during the long nights of winter, still delight to entertain children, who drink it in with the utmost avidity ; whilst a creeping chill pervades their entire system, as they huddle together, competing with each other for the closest vicinity of the hearth. Thus the seeds of superstition are implanted in their tender susceptible minds, where they germinate apace into a rankling forest, which all the philosophy of riper years is unable to eradicate. Thus are rivetted the galling fetters of slavish terror, that multitudes during the period of their natural existence continue under a species of thralldom, which neither strength of body nor vigour of mind is able to overcome. But let us return to the manse, and revisit the parson under his dire dilemma. A moment's reflection having partially retrieved his disordered senses, suspended by sleep, sorrow, and surprise, he arrived at the settled conclusion that the visionary object that loomed on his visual organs was nothing else than the shade of his own beloved spouse, disquieted by some undisclosed secret. And having by speech drawn out the mind of a wandering ghost on some previous occasion, he was perfectly conversant with the dreadful alternative, and reaching the climax of resolve that stood aloof amid the gusts of terror, with tremulous hands he opes the casement, and exclaims—“In the name of Heaven ! what is the cause of thy disquietude ?” when she thus responded, “Fear not, my husband. The being

you address is no empty apparition, but in reality my very self, the wife of your bosom." "Gracious Heaven!" he ejaculates within himself, "what is this? Was not the prophet by satanic agency aroused from the slumbers of the tomb and exhibited to the trembling monarch, wearing the identical form, voice, and costume in which he was wont to kythe himself on the banks of Jordan? And what, can this be my very spouse? How far beyond the range of possibility! Could finite mortals, dreaming of elysian bliss, conceive a more romantic thought? Did not these eyes behold her extended in the passive stillness and silence of death? Did not these trembling hands consign her to the dungeon of corruption, that closed its gloomy portals around her? and though humanity, alike imperfect, has been wrested from the iron grasp of death, and recalled from sepulchral durance, and restored to their bereaved, their disconsolate friends, the age of miracles has long since vanished into the regions of chaos. How, then, has the grave relinquished its spoil, and death its fair trophy? How—" Just at this crisis, his faithful domestic, in a fit of frantic perturbation, rushes up stairs, exclaiming, "Good be wi's! for either the mistress or her ghaist's at the door, duntin' an' wantin' me to open, but am awfu' fley'd. Will ye gang wi' me, sir, an' keep me frae skaith, an' I'll let her in?" With what trembling steps they descended the gloomy staircase! With what restraining hesitation they unbolted the door, and what a flood of apprehensions burst in upon their souls as the door moved backward on its creaking hinges! But how overwhelmed was the parson in a cross current of swelling fear, stirring joy, perplexing amazement, when his living spouse, saluting him, placed her cold icy hand into his! Perceiving now that it was no phantom, no baseless apparition, he received her into his arms, whilst a tumult of discordant emotions struggled in his

breast, such as no tongue was ever able to describe. Amid this unparalleled tempest of feeling, even while a smile of complacency appeared curling gently on his visage, the huge rolling tears, in rapid succession, started from his bewildered eyes. By this unaccountable event, the whole weeping inmates of the manse, influenced by a reflex sensation, aroused from their midnight slumber, rushed with unclothed haste to their maternal friend. Not after having accomplished a long journey to some remote continent on the face of the busy world, but from a twelve hours' immured residence in the silent province of the dead—the noisome land of graves, the husband found himself marvellously re-united to his beloved spouse by the same endearing ties that death had severed; and the bereaved children, again embracing an indulgent mother, grat for very joy.

The remarkable circumstance in the lady's history is reported to have made such an indelible impression on her heart, that, although she survived it many years, and gave birth to several children, a smile was never observed on her countenance. The fell contemplation of having been interred alive, her mysterious deliverance from the thralldom of the tomb, and what may yet be her hapless destiny, effected a complete revolution of her natural temperament, and stamped a sombre seriousness on her whole deportment. In the gayest assemblies, amid the innocent pleasantries of social life, a cloud of rueful melancholy overshadowed her visage, an involuntary sigh frequently convulsed her bosom, and a recoiling shudder galvanized her entire system. Such were the visible effects of an abstracted mind, absorbed in a maze of horrid reflections, and environed with a host of repulsive images. Nor need this unvaried train of pensive gravity at all be wondered at in a rational being actually wrested from the dead, and reclaimed from the depths of the tomb by an

inscrutable Providence, who even renders the unamiable qualities of man subservient to his praise. And although, in the present instance, the sexton, impelled by covetousness, was rendered instrumental in preserving human life, he forfeited all claim to merit on account of the base motive by which he was actuated ; for, in common observation, every moral action derives a peculiar colour and quality from the design or motive which prompts to its performance ; therefore, as the sexton was not instigated by any desire to preserve the lady's life, but to plunder her of the gold-ring, the happy result of his enterprise contracted a stain from the unworthy motive under which it was achieved.

In the silence of midnight, when nature was hushed,
And naught but the terrors of darkness awake—
When the fierce howling wind through the trees leafless rushed,
And the owls screamed aloud while the turrets did shake,

The mean, sordid wretch, by ambition controlled,
Abandons his couch, and his slumber foregoes,
With aims all allured by the glitter of gold,
To plunder the dead in sepulchral repose.

But, ah ! what a marvellous power oft defeats
The craftiest projects ambition contrives !
Ransacking the tomb, what a damper he meets !
The mute becomes vocal, the lifeless revives !

In the regions of silence, and darkness, and dread,
Where all is defenceless, resistance appears :
Th' unhallowed intrusions of man to evade,
The dormant in death's gloomy province appears.

The spoiler, though baulked in his covetous aim,
While plodding for treasure in the depths of the tomb,
Subserved to rekindle life's smouldering flame,
And restore the interred to her family and home.

CHAPTER XII.

THE wayfaring man, however urgent his embassy, important his mission, or hazardous his journey, may relax his energies, may loiter in his path, may doze and slumber in the lap of repose, but time, his silent companion, tarries not in its course, nor halts for the listless lingerer ; it is ceaseless, rapid, and invariable in its motion, incessantly wasting in its effects, ever changing the aspect of creation, revealing the mysteries of the future, and hurling the events of the present into the fathomless gulf of chaos, where slumber the vanished ages of the past. Although the complex machinery of time be actually invariable in its sweeping velocity, and subject to no material influence, yet it is apparently deadened or accelerated by the humour and fancy of changeable mortals. 'Tis weighed and meted by the vicissitudes of life and the contingencies of fate, while it derives an infinite variety of colour, quality, light and shade, from the diversified atmosphere of human destiny. How dark and heavy, how tardy and slothful is time in the dreary season of adversity, sorrow, and suspense ! How light and volatile, and yet how slow and noiseless is time when illumed by the bright inspiration of hope ; it smoothly revolves on a pavement of crystal, or sluggishly hovers on the golden pinions of delight ! And how fleet speeds the chariot of time through the vale of *tempe*, or the groves of Elysium ! where hope's bright star is eclipsed by the blaze of fruition, and where the bitter waters of suspense are drowned in the sparkling sweets of Ambrosia, and absorbed in the deep nectarian streams of enjoyment.

While lovers scan the hour of tryst,
Time lags in savage sport ;
But seated on the primrose bank,
An hour—a day's too short.

Now drawing time, lagging and halting with invidious slackness, at length revealed the blest, the auspicious moon, designed to terminate the rugged course over which the fair Eliza had travelled to the enchanted region of hymeneal bliss. The forecast shadows of the happy consummation shone in her busy thoughts with all their entrancing brilliancy, whilst her heart, with joy before unfelt, bounded on the billows of transport. The smiling serenity of the dawn inspired her with unwonted buoyancy of spirit, as might well be conceived by every heart susceptible of love's thrilling emotions. For on that day her lover, having completed his architectural engagement on the luminous isle, intended to pass from thence to consummate his own tower of felicity by a virtuous union with his long-loved, much-admired Eliza. And much—nay, more than much, even the entire world, in the estimation of the expectant Eliza, hung suspended on the fluctuating elements. She runs out and she runs in, she runs east and she runs west, but still her eyes, her thoughts, her every aspiration, all radiate from one centre, and all converge to one point, and that is yon little insulated empire based in the streaming waters of the Forth, and lashed by the angry billows of the German Ocean. The sovereign orb, remote in the eastern skies, exhibits his flaming crest above the dim horizon, and shoots his oblique beams with diminished vigour athwart the liquid waste; the fogs of the night are rapidly dispelled and vanish apace from his gorgeous presence, and a bright pellucid concave of vaulted azure encircles the whole territory of vision. What a delightful—what a transporting prospect is here presented to the contemplation of the hopeful bride! a prospect replete with splendid predictions of coming joys, bright as the sun's unshaded effulgence, and unchequered as the cloudless expanse of the firmament—a prospect too emi-

nently calculated to excite a tumult of malignant passions in the breast of the two disappointed darlings. Hope extinguished, and love soured into resentment, the flame of envy blazed with unquenchable fury, the smouldering embers of malice and revenge were stirred and fanned into a fiery tempest, and dreadful was the rage of the internal conflict. These combustible ingredients had, for three whole weeks, been collecting themselves into one mass, and were now ready to explode in a deluge of terrific vengeance. The slighted dames could not behold the successful candidate in the street or even in the temple without disfiguring their brows with sullen wrinkles, twisting their beaks into a sneering attitude of contempt, and casting forth a grinning, scourie gansel. But to all these invidious symptoms of scorn, she silently responded in a self-complacent smile of triumph. But what is yon little dingy speck that appears on the bosom of the limpid waters, and to which all her visual powers are directed and her entire affections inseparably rivetted? What but the little crazy pinnace privileged with the superlative honour of wafting the love-inflated architect to the bright meridian of hymeneal felicity! Having effected this soul-stirring discovery, and whilst her dizzy eyes were still dazzling and dancing in the merriligoes, she wheels abruptly round on purpose to bear the tidings of the joyous event to the ears of her anxious mother, who, in her own sphere, was mightily cumbered with the bustle of the occasion. But in her deil-chased hurry, and love-bewildered vision, she overturned a wean in the way, stumbled headlong over it, and peeled the beautiful extremity of her aquiline nose. Being still worse affronted than hurt, the sprawling constituents of Andrew's bride were collected with all possible despatch, the prostrated edifice again erected and put in motion, leaving the wean to skirl out its sorrows and rise at its

own time. This ominous disaster operated powerfully on the animal spirits ; it overshadowed the visage with a darkening haze, it increased the longitude of the features, and checked the vivacity that ere while shone in every evolution ; not on account of the damage sustained by the nasal organ—this was trivial in itself ; neither did the damper proceed from an idea that the scarred organ would prove a repulsive feature in the eyes of the bridegroom—this would rather tend to warm his affection and heighten his regard when acquainted that ardent love for him was the sole cause of the accident ; for who feels aversion, who takes offence at being loved and admired ? But the cloud of disquietude emerged from the dark unstable ocean of conjecture, presenting to the mind a dismal shadow of something unseen, unknown, unconceived. Amongst the symbols of bridal superstition no such article existed as the capsizing and fracturing the nose of a bride on the wedding-day, and none could unriddle the presages it involved ; therefore the interpretation of the fell mishap devolved solely on the wild imagination which, acting on the accustomed principles of romantic extravagance, portrayed the most gruesome figures and constructed the most appalling images of hapless misery that ever chequered the destiny of fallen humanity. These she exhibited to the mental vision in grissly array, as the dismal retinue, the ghastly attendants of the prospective bridal union throughout its stages of existence.

However, come weal or woe, the gleams of joy or the shades of grief, the betrothed damsel, with her patched proboscis, is again on her secret observatory, watching the progress of the tiny bark with her precious consignment. The lofty azure is now marred with clouds wearing a thousand fantastic shapes and diversified colours, and flitting with rapid motion across the disk of the sun. The vital atmosphere, by some inherent cause, aroused

from its native tranquillity, sallies forth of its chamber in intermitting gusts, vexing the still waters, disturbing the peaceful subjects of the forest, and shedding the ripe foliage in lavish profusion. The eager bride beholds with bounding heart the flimsy vessel nearing the haven, and dancing lightly on the surface of the agitated waters, when a sudden whirlwind, with rude assault, inverts her garments, and wraps her head in the modest covering of her limbs. Thus hoodwinked and thus exposed, her own person claimed a glimpse of attention, which being devoted to the adjustment of her raiment, she again directs the powers of her vision seaward in eager pursuit of the world's last object of attraction. She rolls her glistening orbs over the expansive surface of the troubled, the excited element; they come in instant contact with the island, and the masonic pile of endeared contemplation, but no intervening object strikes the wandering gaze. Again and again, with forlorn aspect, she surveys the devious waste, from the rugged shore to the utmost bounds of the visual horizon, but no delightful prospect refreshes the weary eyes, no trace of the little boat that carried all that was lovely, all that adorned the world, either near or remote, loomed on the wishful sight. The warping cords of consternation entangle her entire corporeal system, alarming apprehensions seize all the springs of sympathy and usurp possession of her fair fluttering bosom, whilst a sudden sigh, large and deep, inflates the organs of respiration, and, as by a safety-valve, finds vent in the unconscious exclamation—"Oh! goodness! Whaur is Andrew Brown?" How emphatic the exclamation! How abstruse the question! Where is he? Beyond this visible horizon—beyond the precincts of revolving time—swept from the theatre of active existence—expunged from the chronicles of the living—immured in the shades of oblivion, and numbered with the wrecks of

shattered humanity. That luminous structure, by his ingenuity planned and executed, and whose pristine beams were designed to shed a cheering blaze on the celebration of his nuptials, shine not for him, and only poured its heart-piercing radiance on his widowed bride. Her indulgent mother endeavoured to assuage her sorrows by conceiving the baseless conjecture of his having returned to the island to correct some omission. Although he vanished from her sight in the twinkling of an eye, expiring hope grasped hold of this attenuated thread, which soon proved a deceptive solace, a mere placebo; for early on the morrow, a fisherman, while in the prosecution of his ordinary calling, hooked Andrew's well-known bonnet, adorned with Cupid's indissoluble knot which her own fingers had wreathed. But how dead to every sympathy, how destitute of every amiable feeling must that soul have been who could, without overwhelming emotion, present this certain token of bereavement to the sorrowing damsel—though relics of departed worth are always calculated to afford a melancholy pleasure. Beings, however, still exist in the present, as they figured in the past ages of the world, whose strangely constituted minds appear to derive a peculiar species of delight in communicating evil tidings, whether true or false. See how the undutiful son lacerated the feelings of his doting parent when he spread before him the variegated garment dipped in the blood of the goat, as an undoubted token that the fondled child of his age had been barbarously devoured! Behold the officious courier from the ensanguined battle-field, speeding with impatient haste to communicate the distressful tidings of defeat into the ears of the venerable ecclesiastic, whose eyes were set by reason of his lengthened pilgrimage; he poured a torrent of afflicting events, in rapid succession and unsparing plainness, till the auditor, overpowered by

the harrowing tale of woe, sunk down to the earth, and expired in his presence! And in like manner sped the unceremonious sea-beat nautic, waving the bonnet in his hand as a trophy of victory, and bluffly presented it to the disconsolate female. The last glimpse of hope was now finally extinguished, and every alleviating surmise merged in the doleful reality. This introduced a crisis well calculated to call forth into vigorous action all the dormant sympathies of the human soul—nay, a heart of adamant would have been too solvable a substance to resist the melting influence of a scene so strikingly impressive. Seized with a petrifying horror, she fixed her distracted eyes with a gaze of inexpressible anguish on the dripping helmet that once encircled a head so dear, and now in silent whispers and signs of heart-rending import, declared the untimely fate of her hapless lover. So intensely ardent raged the passion of sorrow in her wounded breast, that under its scorching influence the fountain of grief was totally suppressed, and not a single tear flowed from her staring eyes. Motionless as the artist's imitations in the image of a lifeless statue, with frantic grasp she pressed the cold, the senseless material to her swelling bosom, surcharged with the agonizing throes of bereaved love. An awful silence reigned in the chamber of disappointment, resembling the shadow of death and the profound stillness of the tomb; and a considerable period elapsed ere aught appeared descriptive of the internal conflict that raged unseen in the secret region of thought. At length an overwhelming gust of feeling, a dread convulsive sigh shook her entire existence, and a flood of grief streamed over her pallid cheeks, while she poured forth the deep emotions of her heart in the bitter wailings of sorrow. In her desolate widowhood, she tenaciously clings to the empty bonnet as her inseparable bosom companion, whilst the endeared head

that erewhile possessed it lies immured in darkness and wrapt in the cold weeds of the ocean. Alas ! on what a baseless fabric, what a fleeting phantom, what a deceptive vision, hang all our sublunary enjoyments—ever bowing to the sceptre of vicissitude, mocking the eye and eluding the grasp ! The gilded tower where perched the genius of hymeneal bliss has vanished like a flitting meteor in the heavens. The golden mountain that sustained the brilliant column of prospective joys is overturned by a sweeping blast of fate, and naught remains but a desolate length of sad, unsightly ruins. Here leave the weeping bride to gaze on the rugged scene, the gloomy prospect, till time shall draw the curtain of oblivion around it, and future hope repair the dismal breach.

About this period of the world's existence, the demon of superstition, with his hell-scaped retinue of miseries, stalked with rampant stride over the entire domains of Scotland. Every teeming location of human beings had its possession of witches, wizards, and familiar spirits, its infernal tribunal, its instruments of inquisitorial torture, and its flint-hearted executioner. Helpless innocence was made the cruel sport of insatiate malice, and tortured into the confession of guilt and the acknowledgment of the blackest crimes, under the vain hope of escaping the barbarous ordeal of punishment ; whilst others, endued with more heroic fortitude and inflexible resolve, than gratify the soul of malignant persecution by admitting the false accusation of guilt, were tortured to the death under every species of cruelty that devils could invent and savage humanity inflict. Such was the constitution of witchcraft tribunals that no being, however innocent, whom bigotry accused of infernal compact, could entertain the slightest hope of acquittal. The indictment was tantamount to a conviction, and the conviction to inevit-

able death. A confession of guilt or a protestation of innocence was alike fatal in its result. By the former, the culprit was instantly committed to the devouring fury of the blazing fagots; while by the latter, in order to extort a self-condemnation, the accused was subjected to the torture of the inquisition, and exercised therewith till, by a lingering, an excruciating process of murder, a termination is put to the victim's agonized existence. The number of rational beings thus annually sacrificed for the alleged crime of witchcraft is fearful, is shocking to contemplate, many of whom so blessed with profound ignorance as scarcely to be aware that any other devil existed beyond the fiendish muster of incarnates that rioted in cruelty and sported with the feelings of their tortured victims. The present black policy of the witch-doctors in the most benighted regions of Africa, where the light of civilization has never yet penetrated, affords but an imperfect shadow of the horrid scenes that were enacted under the spurious light that Scotland enjoyed at the period here referred to. The winding rivulets, the fertile glens, the bending forests, and the heath-clad mountains of Scotia then witnessed the direful writhings, and resounded with the piercing shrieks of defenceless innocence, suffering the unmitigated vengeance of relentless barbarism. Where exists a busy haunt of mortals, in whatever sequestered situation, that is not polluted with the blood and chargeable with the murder of human beings, absurdly accused of being in league with Satan and exercising the malignant powers of the infernal world? Nor does the burgh of Crail, once the seat of royalty itself, stand untainted with the perpetration of these revolting deeds of antiquity. Scarce had the circumstances connected with the architect's death and the consequent frustration of Eliza's hopes fulfilled their ninth revolution of the globe—the common duration of a

district wonder—when it began to be surmised and whispered that the catastrophe was occasioned by satanic interposition. The current of conversation amongst the busy tattlers was now diverted into another channel, and every topic, however important, became totally absorbed in the mysterious incantation. During the listless length of a rainy day, when all out-door labour is suspended (an occurrence by no means rare in November), every smithy, every public work-shop, had its own version; and as all the newsmongers of the district usually resorted thither to beguile the tedious hours and discuss all the notable events occurrent in the neighbourhood, every relay of visitants presented its variation in the shape of an amendment; for the tidings brought under discussion were purely local, except when favoured with the company of a pedlar, or sturdy beggar with his huge staff and awmus-dish, either of whom was eagerly listened to as the acknowledged organ of the foreign news. But in the present instance, all appeared more deeply interested in the domestic than in the foreign affairs, as they seemed more deeply imbued with the marvellous; and these wandering, talking journals were no less anxious in their endeavours to collect the circumstances connected with this extraordinary event, that they might furnish entertainment for some fireside group far hence in a distant locality—having amply proved, by previous experience, that the more abundantly replenished, and the more marvellous the contents of their budget, so much the more cordial their welcome, hospitable their billet, and successful their calling. There are some things in nature that contract, or diminish, or evaporate altogether when exposed to the action of the air; and there are other things that undergo a peculiar process of expansion or augmentation under the same influence; and the alleged fatal incantation was evidently a something richly impreg-

nated with the inherent magnifying principle ; since, from a mere partial, underbreath whisper, it accumulated into a loud, a general, a tumultuous clamour—from a mere speck in the heaven, it expanded into a universal cloud—from a mere mole-hill, it rose into a stupendous mountain, whose terrific aspect, whose frowning shadow filled the entire district with profound amazement. Even the desolate bride, in her weeds of weeping widowhood, was by no means unconcerned in the popular fracas. The portentous cloud appeared rapidly thickening into the murky gloom of sackcloth, but in what devoted region the thunderbolt was destined to expend its destructive fury continued a matter of unstable conjecture ; for in this, as well as in other parishes, several beings existed to whom their neighbours fancifully ascribed the possession of the black art, and, according to the current phraseology, were uncannie. But no definite charge of infernal compact was, by the popular voice, preferred against any distinct individual ; but as every existence in the world, even the great globe itself, acknowledges a commencement and a termination, so did this mysterious affair, after it had grown to a pitch of prodigious magnitude. Whilst the all-engrossing subject was under discussion in the kirk porch, on Sabbath morning, the beadle very inadvertently hinted that he observed the mothers of the two jilted Elizas peeping and muttering at the time of the disastrous occurrence. The unsuspecting man would very fondly have retracted his words, but his lips having betrayed confidence, the secret was no longer subject to control ; the whole group caught fire in an instant, like a bunch of lucifer-matches or some such acute combustible materials, and a hundred mouths, in as many seconds, fixed the stigma of witchcraft on the two matrons, and that they effected the swamping of the boat by an incantation, mutually conducted. Such is frequently

the hapless lot of the unfortunate, that they are no sooner branded with one crime, however unjustly, than all the foul deeds that an uncharitable world can possibly rake up from the tomb of oblivion are relentlessly heaped upon them as an aggravation of their misery. Similar, indeed, was the fate of the two accused females ; every mishap that had befallen the district for many years past was now solely ascribed to their agency. As this coast abounds with a variety of excellent shell-fish, it happened in a fine summer evening, that the town-treasurer, released from his public and private duties, resolutely trenched on the rugged, rocky domains of Neptune, on a parton-hunting expedition, when some invisible being, ensconced in the cleft of a rock, caught fast hold of his thumb, and held him during the flux of the tide, by which means the burgh was for ever deprived of his valuable services. In this situation he was discovered after the receding of the water, and, most unfortunately, the public accounts of the burgh being in his pocket, were found in such a mangled, mutilated condition as to baffle the most skilful accomptant ; and, according to the tradition, they remain unaudited to this day. The provost had for six weeks been infested with a huge bummer that audaciously usurped the liberty of perching itself on the summit of his nose ; and as he perfectly recollected the occasion on which the despicable intruder first invaded the territory of his nasal organ, he found no difficulty in discovering whence it originated, and from what power it received its unwarrantable commission. Ever since the dominie, in his own domicile, suffered shipwreck under the love-letter tempest, his little empire, despite the authority of the tawse, had been in a state of formidable insurrection, a circumstance which he could ascribe to no other cause than some secret exertion of infernal influence ; and he, too, being perfectly conversant with the notable

epoch of its commencement, could by no means mistake the source whence it derived its existence. The parson, likewise, after reflecting on the peculiarities with which himself was connected, conceived a shrewd suspicion that the mysterious suspension of vital motion, the expensive funeral that bore heavily on his resources, and the marvellous resurrection of his wife from her sepulchral concealment, were all concerted in the council of Pandemonium, and executed by demoniac agency ; and he, too, could trace the malignant principle of malice to its primary source. All these remarkable events, and a host of other mischanters, equally annoying, though of minor import, were wholly attributed to these two defenceless, and it may be rationally presumed, innocent females. Under this horrid indictment, they were dragged before the witch-tribunal, and exposed to the insult of a mock trial. Although they very naturally denied all participation in the diabolic charge preferred against them, and professed a total ignorance of what was meant by infernal compact, yet, on the application of the torturing instruments, their fortitude relaxed under the agonising pressure, and cherishing a forlorn hope of mercy, they gratified their tormentors with an extorted confession. This merely effected a commutation of their fates, “severer for severe.” They were then pinioned, and forthwith consigned to the fiery bosom of the flaming pile, that speedily quenched their shrieks and absorbed their miseries. The castle-yard was the theatre of this revolting exhibition of barbarism, by which husbands were cruelly bereaved of their partners in life and children deprived of maternal protection.

The peculiar events contained in this and the five preceding chapters all accompanied the building of the lighthouse on the Island of May, under the auspices of the Scottish Parliament in the year 1635. From this

building the benighted mariners were guided by the unsteady blaze of a coal-light for a hundred and eighty-one years, till it was superseded, in 1816, by a splendid modern edifice, exhibiting an oil-light with reflectors.

Whilst the gleams of false science delusively glared,
Fell prejudice raged with unquenchable ire;
And bloodthirsty bigots for mortals prepared
The boot and the thumbkin, the fagot and fire.

But the true light emerging, those horrors expelled,
By devils invented—that Scotia disgraced—
Dissolved the spell-crust in which reason was held,
And the dark thundercloud of barbarity chased.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN the vast, the stupendous, the diversified theatre of the universe, where every creature, whether animate or inanimate, is subject to never-ending vicissitude, a prodigious retinue of remarkable circumstances frequently accompany the development of any notable event, although they have no immediate connection with the event itself. Neither does this host of attendants, however peculiar in their nature, by any means prove that such an event is really a new creation, a something that never before was known to exist in the locality where its advent occurs. Such in reality was the fortune of that masonic pile that for nearly two centuries heaved its luminous head on yon sombre island that marks the confluence of the Forth, and of which the preceding chapter narrates the completion. Notwithstanding its antiquity and the numerous peculiarities that accompanied its advent into being, the train of marvels, the scenes, comic and tragic, that were

enacted in the year of its birth, it lays no claim to the brilliant distinction of an unprecedented novelty; for it only superseded the nocturnal radiance of a plain unadorned beacon that, for more than a century, blazed and flamed and flickered in the winds of heaven. The particulars connected with the origin of this beacon will be adverted to in a subsequent chapter, so far as they have been rendered accessible through the hazy medium of obscure tradition. Meanwhile an event, or rather a series of events, may be here related, in which the glorious, the soul-ennobling reciprocity of gratitude was conspicuously manifested—that rare virtue whose lovely blossoms expand but partially amongst the rankling weeds, the stings and poisons that luxuriate in wild variety over all the climes of earth, these skies being too cloudy, this climate too cold, the soil too barren for the celestial texture of that beauteous flower of paradise.

The Island of May has in every age of maritime commerce been the scene of numerous appalling and disastrous shipwrecks, whereby multitudes of hapless beings have fallen victims to the ruthless fury of the raging elements; and about the middle of the sixteenth century, in the dark, the dreary, the tempestuous month of December, one of those dreadful scenes of death and devastation exhibited itself on the shores of the island. A large and stately vessel from the coast of Spain was unfortunately overtaken in the German Ocean by one of those dread aerial convulsions with which this high latitude is frequently visited. The skies, wrapt in a veil of universal gloom, lowered with a dismal aspect over the devoted bark, as she wallowed in the foaming surf; the raving tempest roared and howled amid the tattered canvas; the rattling cordage, and the creaking masts, pouring a sound of horror chilling as the knell of death into the bewildered souls exposed to its relentless rage; the rushing rain, the

piercing hail, the drifting sleet, in mingled discharge, borne with rapid flight on the tempestuous wings of the storm, battered and blinded the nonplussed mariners as they clung to every imagined security to sustain their giddy footing. No moon shed a beam of borrowed lustre over the benighted hemisphere ; the twinkling host of heaven belied their existence, or, immured in a shroud of impervious vapour, withheld their cheering influence from the habitation of mortals. No ray illumed the terrific chaos, save the intermittent glare of the swift electric flash that only augmented the horror of the prospect, tortured the feeble organs of vision, and exposed the scowling canopy in dreadful contrast with the snowy foam of the raging ocean. But the warring elements, yielding, as it were, to a momentary armistice, a distant light appeared glimmering in the black horizon ; transient was the blaze it exhibited ere it was again concealed by a deep perplexing curtain of intervening sleet, that narrowed the prospect and circumscribed the powers of vision within the limits of a span. A dingy speck now appears looming on the white bosom of the water, and the distant roar, the dashing tumult of breaking billows, sounds with hoarse appalling murmur on the astonished ears of the desponding foreigners, environed with the shades of destruction ; again the dingy object is lost in the obscuring gust of descending vapour ; again, the jarring din of rock-split waves is drowned in the furious discharge of rattling hail, as the vast etherial magazine expends its hoary ammunition on the labouring hulk. But though the eyes may be gulled by delusive shadows and the ears by deceptive sounds, man possesses a sense of more extensive dominion that is less vulnerable to the sleight of deception ; and this ere long gave fearful evidence of the impending doom, in its awful reality. The mariners, lost in a labyrinth of perils, stiffened with cold

and paralysed with hopeless terror, stared on each other with fixed, foreboding eyes, fraught with dire expressions of internal anguish ; while the vessel, restive and unmanageable, reeled and pitched, plunged and tumbled, alternately buoyed on the ridge of a mountain billow, and smothered in the furious surf of a bursting wave, goaded and impelled by the frenzied elements, till, in an unknown region, she bulges with impetuous violence against the craggy cliffs that skirt the island. The collision was frightfully decisive, and rending were the shrieks of despair that blended and competed with the jarring din of the elemental war. By the first disastrous shock many were suddenly precipitated into the raging abyss, and the rest of the hapless Spaniards were thrown prostrate on the severing planks of the deck. Transient, indeed, was the intervening space ere the powerful iron-bound vessel was rent into a thousand fragments, and the rugged coast bestrewed with the wrecks of humanity, and other traces of hideous devastation. One of the principal officers and his wife having made a hairbreadth escape by clinging to a portion of the wreck, were discovered in the morning ensconced in the shelter of a projecting cliff ; though apparently senseless, and motionless as their flinty covert, they still exhibited the symptoms of animation, the expiring embers of vitality. Their distressful situation at once aroused and excited the glowing sympathies of the kind-hearted hospitable islanders, who emulated each other in their attentions and deeds of humanity to the unfortunate strangers. Thus cherished by the milk of human kindness, flowing in artless purity from Scottish bosoms, the languid glimmerings of life's sickly taper again revived and shone forth with undiminished lustre ; and despite the petty jealousies, the hostile feelings that the unhallowed ambition of crowned heads frequently inspire into the hearts of their subjects, rendering man inimical to

man, here every paltry prejudice merged in the amiable exercise of genuine benevolence. Through the friendly interposition of one of the monks of Saint Augustine, then located in the island, a passport was procured for the shipwrecked unfortunates, by which they were again transported, without molestation, to their own kingdom, laden with the unaffected benedictions of the few isolated Scots on whose little sea-girt dominion they had been thrown by the ruthless, the fatal tempest.

About two years subsequent to this disastrous event, a merchant-vessel, belonging to the East Coast of Fife, was unfortunately taken by the enemy, and carried into Cadiz. The defenceless captives stared at each other with the glistening eyes of despondency, having nothing in view but a sudden transit to the invisible world by the horrid apparatus of the executioner, or a lingering death within the gloomy precincts of a rayless dungeon. Under such torturing apprehensions, how overwhelming were the tidings, that, after a period of painful conjecture, of tormenting suspense, saluted their astonished ears! A courier, specially commissioned by the Court, delivered to them a passport in the King's name, with instructions to provide themselves with provisions, and depart in peace to their own country. Knowing the antipathy that then subsisted betwixt the two nations, that beings from this remote section of the world, possessing neither power nor influence (and withal esteemed hostile), should have been thus generously treated, may seem tinged with a hue of the marvellous. So does every peculiar effect, when it appears without its productive cause. The identical shipwrecked officer who had experienced the warm hospitality of the Scottish hearts on the Island of May, having been apprized of the capture of the Scotch vessel, his bosom heaves with swelling emotion, and his heart bounded with delight at the prospect afforded of

returning the unmerited kindness bestowed upon him in the season of extreme adversity ; and standing high in the fickle scale of royal favour, with the flame of gratitude blazing and thrilling and glowing in his breast, he procured admission into the presence of the Sovereign, and besought the royal clemency in favour of the hapless Caledonian captives. So emphatic were the terms in which he eulogised the characteristic hospitality, the friendly disposition of Scotland towards the subjects of his empire, and such was the irresistible ardour of his appeal on behalf of the Scotch prisoners, that the flinty heart of tyranny melted like wax before the scorching beams of the flaming sun ; and this intercession, prompted by a pure sense of gratitude, resulted in perfect success, and procured the release, as above related. Thus unexpectedly freed from the trammels of foreign bondage, those sons of Scotia ere long revisited their native shores, as men awaked from the slumbers of the tomb. Meikle wonder, profound amazement, lofty strains of rejoicing pervaded the entire East Coast, from Fife Ness to the Blue Stone of Largo, on the mysterious restoration of the lost ship and crew, who knew not, at the time, how their liberation had been effected.

“ A grateful mind, by owing, owes not, but
Still pays—at once indebted and discharged.”

After this brilliant manifestation of gratitude (a principle that ever adorns the human character, in whatever region of the world it appears), the great globe had scarcely completed five entire circuits round its orbit, when the supposed invincible armada of Spain, designed to invade the British empire, launched forth on its hostile mission. A universal dread diffused itself over every section of these northern dominions ; the defensive powers were mustered in every quarter to guard their respective

positions ; all were incited to vigilance and heroic courage by the heart-stirring harangues of their leaders, and even by the melting strains of female eloquence flowing from the mouth of royalty itself ; and in all churches, the interposition of the Deity was earnestly invoked to avert the impending scourge that, with menacing aspect, hung over these devoted realms. The proud, the formidable navy of Spanish galiots, impelled by the rude winds of aggressive ambition, now bounds with majestic prow over the ridgy surface of the saline deep, fraught with the infernal design of invasion, rapine, storm, and carnage ; and laden with the engines of war and elements of destruction, with inflated canvas and fiendish hearts, burning with an ardent thirst of conquest, they speed apace to the execution of their unhallowed project, surer to prosper than prosperity could have assured them ; but how vain, empty, and void oft proves the insolent boast of assailants while vested and accoutred with the harness of war ! The castles, towers, and heaving mountains that diversify the envied object of assault had just exhibited their diminished heads, emerging in the distance and looming imperfectly on their eager eyes, when, lo ! what a horror of amazement, what a tempest of consternation, interrupt the stream of transport, the flood of dazzling success, that flowed untainted in their bosom—cherishing the bold aspirations of pride and boundless presumption ! The shores of Albion they were destined to touch and tread not with invading triumph, but with prostrate humility, supplicating the clemency of those identical beings and the hospitality of those regions whose death and subjugation they aimed to accomplish. Sudden as the electric flash illumines the night-wrapt sky, the elements of nature, governed by some invisible impulse, burst forth with all the ruthless vigour of envenomed rage ; the raving hurricane, the

rushing torrent, the rolling, bursting billows, in direful union leagued, diffused dismay and dread confusion through the ponderous fleet. That fleet which just the morn before appeared in proud array reflected in the clouds of heaven—now what a spectacle of fell reverse! Behold, the great armada plunged into wild disorder, tossing and tumbling, dashing and jostling each other, resisting all control save the potent influence of the furious tempest! Thus environed with the gloomy shades of impending fate, involved in the horrors of midnight darkness, apparently in the centre of a convulsed universe of yawning perils, could the heart of hostility itself deny a faint response of sympathy? But it was only in certain quarters where this feeble tribute was conceded. This multifarious squadron, that left their own domains buoyed on the proud wing of invading purpose, was ultimately dashed in shipwrecked helplessness on the shores devoted as the subjects of their unsparing vengeance, and the English, the Scots, and Hibernians beheld the inveterate foe landing on their coasts, humbled in the peaceful prostration of death. Those who escaped the dangers of the sea were in general subjected to severe hardships on account of their hostile mission, being either imprisoned or put to death without quarter.

It most fortunately happened, however, for one of the Spanish galiots that, in the midst of the disastrous tempest, she was driven by some benign influence into the port of Anstruther. Here, the shipwrecked mariners were as utter strangers to the soil on which they trode, as demure and bewildered as if they had been thrown on some nameless island of savage inhabitants amid the slumbering waters of the great Pacific; but themselves being actuated by a violent spirit of invading hostility towards their fellow-mortals, they naturally concluded that their lot was cast in a region of enemies ready to

act on the merciless principle of retaliation; and the Spanish commander being conducted into the presence-chamber of the bailies and minister, in the bending attitude of a suppliant, prefers his humble suit.

As representative of all the sailors and soldiers under his auspices, he places all at the disposal of the civic authorities—life, life alone was the burden of his petition, the plea for which he hopelessly sued. The bailies in the meantime ordered kail and parritch to be prepared for the whole company, and that they be detained till his Lordship of Anstruther, resident in the castle of Drill, should signify his will and pleasure regarding them. Memory now began to recall from the shades of the past the entire circumstances connected with the capture of the ship and crew belonging to that port, the humane treatment they received from a foreign enemy, and their unexpected liberation, as formerly referred to. This rekindled the glow of gratitude in the bosom of every inhabitant of Anstruther, and it was brilliantly manifested by every conceivable act of pure hospitality and unfeigned benevolence towards the shipwrecked enemies of their country. By application to the reigning monarch of Scotland for the time being, a passport was granted to carry them beyond the bounds of his dominions, and they accordingly departed in peace, being more effectually subdued by the kindness of enemies than ever mortals were mortified by the treachery of friends. The pernicious effects of war have been amply experienced in every age of the world, being always decisive in the suppression of national intercourse, the subversion of commerce, and the consequent ruin of empires; the persons and property of the subjects, whether by land or sea, are incessantly encompassed with hideous perils in a thousand shapes; and that tranquillity of mind arising from conscious security, never glows in the bosom

of the subject, never pervades the veins of a hostile nation. The shattered fragments of the vanquished armada having returned in safety to their own country, the identical hoary-headed Spanish commander who appeared as an humble suppliant before the bailies of Anstruther, there discovered another vessel belonging to that port, that had recently been seized and arrested by the Spanish Government. No time was lost in the discharge of those duties that flowed from a lively sense of gratitude, and, in the presence of his Sovereign, no language was spared in eulogising the Scottish nation, till he ultimately prevailed over the hostile prejudices of the King, and procured the release of the captives. These particulars are gleaned from ancient records, and here adverted to merely on account of the prime cause of the admirable principle of reciprocating gratitude, having its origin in the Island of May, as already described. Thus frustrated in the purpose of their barbarous mission, and overpowered by the melting kindness of their fellow-men, whom grasping ambition had doomed to slaughter or slavery, the subdued foreigners blushed, admired, and wept.

Curs'd be that thirst of power that reigns in regal hearts,
And man to man a feeling of hostility imparts.

"Now, ye round heads, and crowned heads, attend to those strains,
Ye clear heads, and queer heads, and heads without brains ;
Ye thick skulls, and quick skulls, and heads great and small,
And ye heads that aspire to be heads over all."

CHAPTER XIV.

SOMEWHERE about the second quarter of the sixteenth century, John Rowel, who is said to have been of Ger-

man extraction and allied to the monks of St Augustine, had his monastic residence in the Island of May, the ruins of which being still visible. This exalted personage, by certain peculiar qualities inherent in himself, obtained an eminent place in the royal favour of the reigning Sovereign, who, in consequence, conferred on him many distinguishing powers, privileges, and immunities. Under the warming influence and fertilizing dews of royal favour, which fawning flatterers alone were then privileged to enjoy, he was transferred from his isolated residence, and constituted Prior of Pittenweem, and placed in full possession of chartered revenues, amounting to five hundred pounds sterling, or upwards, per annum. He was likewise created one of the Lords of Session, and entitled to all the emoluments belonging to that dignified situation of exalted importance. The prior had a pinnacle of rather peculiar construction, but fitted out according to the antiquated elegance of those times. By means of this vessel, which was propelled by four oars, a periodical correspondence was regularly maintained between the priorists of Pittenweem and the monastics on the island. And as the prior was subjected to the payment of no port charges, by a charter granted to him by the burgh of Pittenweem, it is imperatively declared that the sum of five pounds, lawful money of Scotland, shall be annually paid to that burgh from the revenues pertaining to the monks of Saint Augustine holding orders in the city of St Andrews, and the same to be applied in repairing and upholding the bulwarks. A miniature representation of the prior's pinnacle was in 1675 emblazoned on the town's seal and public cross of the burgh, by decree of the Lyon King of Arms, whereof an extract is here subjoined :—

To all and sundrie whom it effeirs, I, Sir Charles Araskine of Cambo, baronet, Lyon King of Arms,—Considering that be severall

acts of parliament, also weell of our soveraigne Lord Charles the Second, be the grace of God, King of Scotland, England, France, and Ireland, defender of the faith; as of his majesties royall predecessors, especiallie be the twentie-one act of the third session of the Second Parliament of his said Majestie, now current, I am impowered to visit the wholl armes and bearings within this kingdome, and to distinguish them and matriculate the same in my books and registers, and to give armes to vertuous persons; and extracts of all armes; expressing the blazoning thereof under my hand and seall of office, and which register is to be the forecited act ordained to be respected as the true and unrepeallable rule of all armes and bearings in Scotland, to remain with the Lyon's office as a publict register of the kingdome: Therefore, conforme to the power given to me be his sacred Majestie, and according to the tenors of the said acts of parliament, I testifie and make knowen that the armes of old belonging to the royall burgh of Pettinweem, and now confirmed be me, are matriculate in my said publict register, upon the day and dait of ther presents, and is thus blazoned, viz.—The said Royall Burgh of Pettinween gives for ensignes armoriall, azure in the sea, a gallie with her oars in action, argent and therein standing the figur of St Adrian, with long garments closs girt, and a mitre on his head proper; holding in his sinister hand a crosier, or on the stern a flag disveloped argent, charged with the royall armes of Scotland, with this word *Deo duce*: Which armes above blazoned, I hereby declare to have been and to be the true and unrepeallable signes armoriall of the burgh royall above-named forever.—In testimonie whereof I have subscribed this extract with my hand and have caused append my seall of office thereto.—Given at Edinburgh the Second day of August, and of our said soveraigne Lord's reigne the twentie-fyft year, 1673.

(Signed) CH: ARASKINE,
Lyon.

At this period not only the priory but the burgh itself was invulnerably secured at every accessible point by massive gates and bars, so that neither ingress nor egress was practicable after the sun's descent below the horizon had given place to the shades of night, until his reappearance in the orient skies had dissipated the surrounding gloom and chased away the louring terrors of the night. The conventuals in the priory, however, always enjoyed

the freedom of access through the medium of a subterraneous passage extending from thence in a southward direction, and terminating under the frowning brow of a precipitous rock, close by the full sea. Although the southern extremity of this subterraneous passage presents the appearance of a small natural cove or petty weem (whence the burgh probably derived its name), the craft of the civil engineer is more visibly displayed throughout its entire construction than the wonderful operations of nature. In this avenue of Stygian gloom, this infernal region of barbarism, this porch of pandemonium, were two rooms or catacombs considerably apart from each other; these dismal abodes stand registered in the volume of tradition as theatres of flagrant iniquity and savage cruelty, eminently calculated to reflect eternal disgrace on the human character—scenes only outrivalled in horror by the more modern barbarities ascribed to the gorgeous Inquisition at Madrid, which was ransacked by the forces of Napoleon, and as a speck that mars the beauty of creation exterminated and erased from the annals of existence; and as crime and terror have always been inseparable companions, these horrid associations have, through a long series of ages, rendered this cove an object of dire terror to the timid soul. The youngsters, with quaking hearts, have fled with rapid pace from its fell vicinity, under the awful impression that they had either seen or heard the deil; even the gruesome carl of nameless antiquity, that first assumed the pulpit and the bench, as the expounder of the law and interpreter of prophecy to man in the blest abodes of primitive innocence—nay, there was the arch-foe of heaven and earth rendered visible or audible, staring with horrid grimace through the time-rent fissures of the rock-work, or growling, rustling, or rumbling in the rayless chambers of the dreary cavern. This subterranean solitude has through

a waste of dark ages teemed with dreadful sights and appalling sounds, the baseless brood of fancy ; and in numerous instances, the dazzling glare of the nineteenth century is utterly incompetent to dissipate the gloom created by these false terrors in the comparatively enlightened mind. And still, when wrapt in the dusky mantle of night, mature age, not less than the timid youth, accomplish their purposed mission by a circuitous journey, rather than approach this reputed den of every ghastly existence. In connection with this gloomy rock-bound cavern, tradition records a remarkable event, purporting to have occurred about the second quarter of the sixteenth century. Such was the despotic influence which priestcraft at that period exercised over the enslaved faculties of rational, immortal humanity, warpt, entangled, and bewildered in a mazy jungle of superstition, that monkish hypocrisy was estimated as genuine piety, and all who appeared habited in the sacred vestments were revered and adored as incarnate divinities. The matrimonial union was esteemed wholly incompatible with the sanctity of the priestly office, and too profane an institution to be observed by beings so pious, so divine. With such profound ingenuity did hypocrisy weave the deceptive mantle, and with such dexterity did she therewith envelope her unhallowed progeny, that the most piercing vision was unable to descry a human shadow through the foil of affected divinity ; nay, such was the specious disguise studiously assumed by every personification of priestcraft, that, as the beautiful, the blooming Shunnamite was placed in the royal bosom of the eastern minstrel, to sooth and cherish his declining years, even the fond indulgent parent, under the delusive influence, could have placed his only daughter, suffused with the modest smiles of blushing virginity, in as close contact therewith, impressed with the firm conviction that she would

be restored to the home of her birth untainted by the pestiferous breath of cupidity and untarnished by the foul touch of unhallowed passion. Alas! what deplorable delusion! Priestcraft has never been aught but a deep concerted system of base, bewildering, soul-enslaving policy, involving its hapless votaries in a labyrinth of mystifying vapour and degrading ignorance, deeper and more solid than Egyptian darkness. Whatever were the state and condition of the rational world at that remote period, here it is by no means concluded that the former days were worse than these; for in every age and clime, where priestcraft has acquired absolute ascendancy over the souls and bodies of men, intellectual thralldom has ever accompanied its shadow and constituted its most prominent feature. And, however ingenious the imposture or strikingly perfect the counterfeit stamp, however thick, or dark, or impervious to human vision may be the veil in which the being is wrapt, the man is still the man, and the priest is the man still; nay, more, how frequently does it occur, both in the natural and moral world, that the most pernicious qualities are found ensconced in the fairest, the most attractive, and least suspicious exterior, as here exemplified!

At the period from which tradition dates this narrative, the priory enjoyed immense revenues, possessed extensive influence, and exercised unbounded jurisdiction over the entire district, both in civil and ecclesiastical matters. It was then inhabited by a junto of monkish conventuals, profoundly erudite in all the stratagems, wiles, and intrigues of rampant feudalism, and under the deep mask of religion, were themselves the shrouded actors in many a horrid drama. Muffled in the shades of obscurity, and immured in subterranean darkness, the sickening scenes enacted in those dreary catacombs, however revolting their contemplation to a rightly-consti-

tuted mind, were perfectly in keeping with the spirit of that licentious age. It has been pertinently expressed in allegory, that "hedges have eyes and rocks themselves have ears;" and were these witnesses likewise endued with the faculty of speech, fell and dreadful were the horrid disclosures. The sudden and mysterious disappearance of respectable females, in whom were concentrated all the charms of youth and beauty, was a circumstance of no singular occurrence; again and again had the tender parent been constrained to endure the bitter poignancy of grief, and spend his days and years in the agonising gloom of suspense on account of such unaccountable bereavements. Oft was the entire district immersed in a fathomless ocean of perplexing wonderment, involved in a labyrinth of dubious conjecture, wrapt in the tangles of interminable speculation, and bewildered amid the heights and depths, the clouds and mystifying vapours of the wild imagination. Even the town-crier enjoyed the privilege of dipping his official finger in the motley stew, and neither his dinsome vocation nor his burghal emoluments sustained any diminution from those marvellous elopements. But all continued wrapt in the haze of inextricable dubiety, till the oblivious waves of time gradually effaced their deep-struck, indelible impressions. To unravel these mazes of dire perplexity, the most unwearied research, the most industrious scrutiny, the most persevering vigilance, all resulted in a total failure. No glimmering star shot a chequering ray through the vista of mystery—no transpiring radiance ever emerged from the distant horizon to dissipate the bewildering haze in which these elopements were wrapt; and the hapless fate of the blooming damsels still remained locked up in the rayless darkness of death, in silence unbroken, settled and profound, as it reigns in the chambers of the tomb.

There is a certain portion of time, annually described by the revolving pinions of the great universal chronometer, when the sovereign of day, while he burns in all his majestic splendour in the southern hemisphere, shoots but a transient glance, feeble and oblique on the heath-clad heights of Caledonia ; whilst in the glens of peaceful solitude, the flowery meads, and the fertile valleys, prostrate nature, withered and lifeless, partakes no cheering glimpse of his enlivening influence. Here reigns a successive series of raging storms, chilling damps, dreary darkness ; a bleak uncourteous season, dull, gloomy, and heartless to all, save those whose brilliant, whose uninterrupted flow of animal spirits, supplies a continual feast to the happy possessors. 'Twas in the very depth of this uninviting, this cheerless, inhospitable season, when the vegetable empire, through its wide domains, lay slumbering in dead sterility beneath the frowning aspect of ungenial heavens, that Betsy Smith, just stepping from the extreme round of her teens, all unsuspecting, artless and lovely, plighted her troth to visit the dwelling of a friend, and there enjoy the Christmas eve in lightsome frolic and innocent pleasantry, with a select few of her blooming peers. Betsy was the only daughter of a respectable merchant residing on the identical spot, if not in the same house, which was subsequently rendered classical on account of the part assigned it in the Porteous mob.

The great fountain of light had terminated his short-lived career in these bleak inclement skies, and withdrawn his vital influence from the hoary mountains, the rifled forests, and the dead cold earth, deluged with the torrents of winter. The expiring moon, worn to the veriest crescent, ceased to illumine the murky horizon of eve, and in full aspect was dispensing her pallid beams over the uncultured wilds, the savage solitudes, the

unblest abodes of the tyrant and slave, where bears and tigers roam. The sparkling stars, that traverse the ocean of infinitude, concealed their thousand twinkling eyes behind a densely woven veil of congregated vapour ; and night profound, clothed in sackcloth of rayless majesty, wielded her cheerless sceptre over the favoured land of the free. Such were the external circumstances, such the dreary prospect under which our heroine, all unsuspecting, artless and lovely, quitted the comforts of the domestic hearth, the security of a happy home, and the enlivening smiles of parental affection, to implement a previous pledge, and enjoy the social intercourse of kindred spirits. As she wended her way through the Coif-gate,* selecting her footsteps by the aid of a glimmering torch, secured from the surly atmosphere in a casement of horn, the distant tread of some benighted being fell softly on her ears. This surmise resulted in no wild freak of the timid imagination, no deceptive whisper of the affrighted fancy. In a transient space, fraught with conjecture, a well-known visage loomed in full prospect upon her humid vision, and the soft accents of a familiar voice saluted her listening ears, ever ready to imbibe the tale of misery, as well as the bounding vibrations of heart-felt joy ; with rivetted attention she harkened to the plaintive voice of feigned embarrassment, conceived in a heart pregnant with villany, and delivered by a mouth better fitted to vent the sulphurous fumes of perdition, than proclaim to rational beings the precious tidings of celestial love. Marvel not at these peculiar expressions : consult the history of the world since the commencement of the ecclesiastical era ; and, when the hero here introduced is exhibited in the cha-

* A sequestered alley on the north side of the burgh, now known by the name of the Routine Row.

racter and costume of a priest, the black catastrophe, though yet undeveloped, will flash on the unprejudiced mind with the perspicuity of a sunbeam—yes ; a walking image of divinity—a disguised fiend in the sheep's clothing of innocence—a professed ambassador from the court of heaven—an arch-confederate with the powers of hell. This wonderful compound of incongruous qualities, this amazing concurrence of discordant elements, is by no means to be regarded as a novelty in creation, expressly summoned into existence for the accomplishment of a special purpose ; neither is such to be contemplated as some supernatural being, admitting no precedent or subsequent, but mysteriously transferred from a distant planet merely to perform a singular part in the drama of human life. How glorious were it, indeed, for every department of society—how happy for man's social intercourse with man, did such a position find a basis in the world ! But the blood-stained annals of antiquity, the unamiable pictures displayed in dismal retrospect, and the hideous colours incessantly reflected in the mirror of modern experience, establish the fell reverse. Every age of the world, every successive generation of mortals, from the Babel of Shinar to the curfew-knell of yesterday, has produced its monstrous incongruities, its prodigies of vice gilded with the foil of virtue, its satanic incarnations displaying the stamp of divinity. And never was the gullible fortress of humanity more successfully attacked than by the subtle craft ensconced in the sable uniform and environed with a halo of apparent piety. This is the shibboleth by which all suspicion is ingeniously averted, and under the shadow of which every species of knavery, crimes of every shade and magnitude, often maintain a protracted invisible existence. How many ages have rolled down the dark stream of oblivion since the golden calf was worshipped at the base of the sacred mountain,

and yet it has its irresistible charms. In this, the philosophy that no substance can possibly be annihilated, is peculiarly supported; for although this marvellous metamorphose of Egyptian trinkets, this glittering, cloven-footed divinity, was consumed by the same element that produced it, another and another, like the fabulous Phoenix, in a line of interminable succession, have emerged from its ashes. Although the priest, whose desperate device, like a raving hurricane descending on the placid bosom of an unruffled lake, disturbed the equanimity of meekness itself, inducing a catastrophe by which the entire decalogue, new from the finger of Heaven, was converted into a mass of irreparable ruins; yes, although the clerical founder, who first bowed to his own, his deified calf, has long since merged into his humble origin, there have existed amongst his successors, in every age and clime, multitudes who, when the dulcimer of patronage is sounded, are ready to prostrate themselves at the foot of the golden image. Taught to esteem themselves as a superior order of beings, designed by Heaven to enjoy the unqualified veneration or semi-worship of a confiding world, and flattered into a belief that theirs is the prerogative to control the destinies of man, with what amazing self-complacency do they assume the god, and, from their imaginary eminence, hurl with relentless fury the hot thunderbolts of Divine vengeance on the devoted heads of all that dare to hazard a glance of opposition.* Respectfully abating the pious

* Lest this should be considered an overwrought description of the peculiar texture of the cloth, a corroborative evidence may be quoted from a parochial pulpit on the East Coast of Fife, in the nineteenth century. The parson having been subjected to a certain portion of out-door opposition, took advantage of his pulpit privilege to avenge himself of the indignity; and after a half-hour's indiscriminate belabouring, he adjusted his wig, fixed a brace of

exceptions (comparatively few), how transcendently beautiful do the solemn principles of religion dangle like golden apples at the point of their tongue! while their brightest, their most exalted motives, are all absorbed in the alluring splendours of the benefice, and their noblest aims, in a life of luxurious ease or licentious indulgence.

But, waving this unpleasant digression, let us return to the Coif-gate, and there, for a moment, by the faint illumination of her own lanthorn, contemplate the lovely fair one, the bonnie blooming Betsy, listening to the soft seductive breathings of the monkish vampire—here, in single solitude, where no finite ear besides, susceptible of woe, receives the accents of unbounded distress; no heart, besides, in tender, soothing sympathy, responds, confides, obeys—none but Betsy. Just like her maternal original, imbibing the fallacious logic of the arch-apostate, basking amid the fragrant bowers—the nectarine groves—the ambrosial sweets of paradise, how swells her innocent bosom with tender emotions of mingled pity and respect!—how does the thrill of genuine sympathy vibrate on every chord of her heart, every spring of her tender affections!—how do her glistening eyes, swimming amid the limpid dews of compassion, express the undisguised feelings of her bosom!—how suddenly is every smirking feature lost amid the gloomy shades, the dark distended lines of melancholy! every towering thought of gay delight solved in the crucible of grave concern for the child of Heaven!—how is her whole soul warped in the cords of sympathy, while thus in melting strains he pours his misery into her listening ears!

indignant eyes on his principal opponent, and gave vent to his choler in the following *beautiful* apostrophe—“And you, sir, what would you think if I was to open the flood-gates of hell upon you, and in an instant sweep you headlong into the gulf of perdition? I say, sir, if you *will* be devilish, *be* devilish; and if you wish to be d——d, *go* be d——d, but don't meddle with my work.”

“Gracious Heaven! What transcendent mercy? what divine interposition is this? what? but a repetition of the miraculous pillar of fire in exact similitude. And can the object who bears it belong to the realms of terrestrial existence? a creature of earth, the last fair work of Heaven? Nay, rather does my disordered vision, bewildered under a horror of darkness, deceive my reeling reason, delude my intellectuals, and involve the noblest faculties of the soul in a tangly net-work of ravelled perplexity; or, have the wild errant vagaries of disordered fancy subdued the citadel of reason, invaded the province of judgment, and usurped the golden sceptre of absolute dominion over the entire image of Deity? What astounding vision! what an overwhelming mystery is this! Are mortal eyes again permitted to behold an immortal substance, a seraph from the regions of celestial purity? Is the eternal anthem in heaven marred, dismembered, or suspended for the sake of a servant beneath, still habited in a vestment of dust, that, from the sacred choir, I am privileged with the view of this angelic denizen of yonder glorious realm of felicity? or, in very deed, has the irresistible influence of the hallowed mass unbarred the portals of purgatory, and, from the mysterious region of Hades, recalled to the scene of probation a shade of departed humanity? How dreadful is this place! How are the joints of my loins loosened, and every muscle, every bone, nerve, and sinew relaxed! How is my fancied fountain of celestial solace become a source of perplexing disquietude! Mine is the position of Israel’s primitive sovereign, trembling before the prophet’s apparition, though such only realized the desire of his infatuated heart. How reels my astonished soul on the tremendous precipice of invisible existences! The gleam of Divine wisdom, overwhelmed in a dark tempestuous ocean of romantic conjecture, and warpt in a mazy jangle,

a boundless labyrinth of appalling imagery ;—but it breathes, it sighs, it coughs ! What ? can it possibly be a real combination of tangible atoms, still acknowledging the sceptre of time—still destined to soothe the sorrows of man, as he plods his weary way through the rugged pilgrimage of life ? This is all within the precincts of possibility ; but how does my quaking heart shrink back from the resolve, and my trembling hand from the act of proving by a sensible evidence !”

Thus, the benighted monk continued a sort of raving soliloquy, with his envenomed eyes rivetted on the visage of the astonished damsel, which changed colour like the bounding dolphin dragged from its native element, and expiring beneath the scorching radiance of the sun. Her lovely eyes glistened with intense interest, and every feature wore the expressive symptoms of deep internal emotion. And having wound up her feelings to a certain pitch of excitement, he paused, and affecting to have made a discovery, he thus, in a different strain, resumed his deceptive oration :—

“Inscrutable mystery ! What a marvellous revelation ! what a vivid glimpse of supernatural light has flashed on my deceitful vision ! What ? Betsy Smith ! the identical Betsy Smith ! Precious image of the Blessed Virgin, divinely commissioned to rescue the ambassador of Heaven from the dire dilemma in which, by some severity of fate, he has been mystically involved ! Here is no treacherous Delilah, no deceitful Jael presenting butter in a lordly dish, while the nail and hammer, the instruments of death, were in readiness to seal the doom of the unwary, the exhausted fugitive ! Blessed creature—highly favoured emblem of artless innocence—whither wanderest thou ? In what sequestered region of the fallen world are mine eyes privileged to behold thee, the solace of my desponding soul ? Here have I

strayed for a period of tedious duration, under a total suspension of all my recollective faculties, environed with a thousand imaginary pitfalls controlled by satanic incantation, and wrapt in a dismal horror of darkness, only equalled by the solid gloom that once enveloped the seven streams of the Nile. The hapless mariner, despoiled of his compass and rudder, and tossed on the rugged bosom of a trackless ocean, was never more distracted, more bewildered than I, the guardian of your immortal spirit. Chilled by the comfortless breath of the ungenial atmosphere, and drenched with the drops of the night, I shiver like the trembling aspen, and am ready to expire in this theatre of enchantment. But, I pray thee, dispel that lowering cloud of amazement that hangs so heavily on thy visage. Be thine the privilege of a seraph ; go before me with that pillar of fire ; conduct me out of this hideous wilderness, and bring me to the abodes of peace and security ; so shalt thou be blest of the blessed, and bask for ever in the smiles of Heaven."

This pathetic appeal of the afflicted conventual, preferred with so much apparent sincerity, engaged all the sympathies of her nature, and summoned into lively exercise every amiable feeling that usually reflects a divine lustre on the virtuous female character. She at once becomes solicitous for his safety, comfort, and preservation. She bows assent to his request, reverses her locomotive energies, and proceeds in the van, with her pillar of fire, to conduct the benighted pilgrim to the consecrated mansions of terrestrial repose. Every rational being, whatever be the nature of the mission on which he embarks, is governed by certain aims and motives, and, however secreted from the ken of mortals, has always some definite object in view ; but, in the present instance, though the aims by which both were actuated conduct to one destination, how very different was the

motive, how opposite the impulses by which they are actuated, whilst wading with dubious step amid the deep surrounding gloom! how does the guiltless bosom of the faithful leader thrill with the glowing fervour of benevolence! how expands her heart with the heaven-born flame of delight! how does every spring of her affections shiver with the sweetest vibrations of transport, on the blest reflection that she, born in nameless obscurity, should, by the random throw of fate's mysterious die, be distinguished as a star of comfort in the bleak horizon of life, a refreshing oasis in a wilderness of teasing turmoil, a world of woes! Thus on she mused in artless silence, while, guided by the faint flickering taper which she bore, the wily serpent followed in the rear, whetting his envenomed sting to poison her existence, and consummate her ruin. In his treacherous breast, how wallowed the foul, the malignant vermin of vicious desires, fostered in the noxious filth of impurity! how raged the hell-blown fire of licentious passion, as he glanced on the hapless damsel all unconscious of her unenviable position, and the tempest of misery that was rapidly gathering around her! Not a word dropped from his deceitful tongue, not a whisper floated on his pestiferous breath, while, with heart-bounding exultation, he followed in the rear of his devoted game. All was mute as the star of midnight, save the light foot-tread of their own fleet heels, impelled by the stirring emotions of pure benevolence in the one, and the bounding inflations of fiendish joy in the other. Having reached the confines of the monastic territory, the gate oped, as it were, at his bidding, and, in the twinkling of an eye, the monk and his fair pilot were on consecrated ground. He, now exulting in the perfect success of his infernal stratagem, throws off the ingenious disguise, and kythes himself in his real stygian colours; and, by his indecent conduct towards

the unsuspecting female, she soon perceived the perilous situation in which she was placed. Every cord of his seductive ingenuity was stretched to the last pitch of endurance, every faculty of his debased soul was exerted to its utmost effort in order to effect a voluntary yielding, a pacific surrender of the citadel of virtue. But, as the isolated rock, securely based in the fathomless abyss of the ocean, remains unshaken while the howling tempest raves with empty menace, and the foaming billows rage with idle fury around it, so stood the blooming Betsy on the high vantage-ground of fixed moral principle, unmoved by the subtle wiles of the alluring tempter, who began to discover that he had reckoned without his host ; and that her open countenance, and communicative freedom, were by no means indications of simplicity, especially when her virtue, her reputation, her happiness, her all, were in jeopardy and reeling on the precipice of irreparable ruin. If ever she raised her downcast organs of vision, that swam in tears, it was only to glance on the faithless guardian of her soul the pungent arrows of ineffable contempt and bitter indignation. Thus, perceiving the frustration of his malignant hopes, and writhing under the torturing agonies of disappointment, he sprang towards the door as if to afford sudden and indignant egress to the confined captive ; but, alas ! this was but the harbinger of her trials, the vestibule of her misery, the mere prelude to a more insuperable destiny. With the furious demeanour of a maniac, he seized her lanthorn with the one hand and herself with the other, and having dragged the sighing, weeping, imploring female down a steep unknown, consigned her, for the night, to a rock-bound dungeon of dreary darkness, unchequered as the gloom of chaos. The retiring tread of her remorseless oppressor having died upon her ears, all was silence profound as the stillness of the tomb ; not

a sound was heard from earth, air, or ocean, save the convulsive sighs that heaved her artless bosom, pervading in whispering echoes the dismal mansions of horror that inclosed its lonely occupant. Here she stood overwhelmed with trembling amazement and shivering terror, till exhausted nature, sinking under the weight of accumulated anguish, imperatively demanded repose; and committing her cause to that Being whose eye penetrates the hardest rock and the deepest seclusion, and whose benign communications depend not on the intercession of hollow priests, she sank down into a species of disquieted slumber, haunted with a retinue of ghastly visions.

Since the globe first with vital existence was stored
And the planets their bright revolutions began,
The beasts of the wild in the jungle have roared,
But man's greatest foe has existed in man.

From the high heaving mountains enveloped in snow
The torrents have rolled with impetuous sweep—
Have mingled earth's joys with the wailing of woe,
And mortals have hushed to perpetual sleep.

The tempest has raved with unquenchable sway,
The thunders have roared in the heavens aloud,
Oft fraught with destruction, and winged with dismay,
While death rode in triumph on the bolt from the cloud.

The belching volcano, the earth rending quake,
O'er earth's fairest climes devastation have spread,
Exhibiting drear in their desolate wake,
Wide woes for the living, and graves for the dead.

Tho' animate being, and things without life,
Fulfilling their Maker's immutable plan,
Show nature's wild works still with nature at strife,
Yet man's most productive of misery to man.

CHAPTER XV.

WITH light has ever been associated all that is lovely, inviting, and agreeable ; with darkness, all that is gloomy, frightful, and repugnant to the soul ; and, however favourable the rayless obscurity of night, in its periodical returns, may be to cowardly deeds of rapine, plunder, and spoliation ; and however prized and courted and admired by those man-shaped pests of society, those scourges of creation, those man-destroying villains who exhaust all their ingenuity and expend their every energy in such nefarious pursuits—darkness still descends on the civilised world, fraught with a thousand terrors. One grand cause of this torturing disquietude, is “man’s inhumanity to man ;” and another is based on the prevalent belief, that supernatural existences, muffled in the shades of night, traverse the varied climes of earth, obtruding their grisly forms on the vision of benighted mortals. This is solely the effect of an ancient deep-rooted superstition, which all the philosophy, all the scientific knowledge of more enlightened modern ages has not been able to eradicate.

Contemplate now the happy group in which the unfortunate Betsy designed to mingle ; with them, every carping anxiety is absorbed in the flippant jocularity, the brilliant glances of enjoyment, and the bursting laugh that proceeds from kindred hearts, inflated with unclouded joy, basking amid the cheering splendours of social comfort. Little do they know, and as little do they think of their hapless comrade, immured in dreary solitude within the slimy walls of a subterranean dungeon. Though her sparkling eyes shone not in their assembly—though her modest wit contributed not to the strains of pleasantry that pervaded the scene of thrilling animation, such a

cause of detention lay as remote from their imagination as the earth is from Jupiter. And as it was previously arranged by the select party, to prolong their diversions and visit the bee-garden at midnight, to gratify their fancy by the real or imaginary movement of the hives, which are still said, by the lovers of the marvellous, to celebrate, by a singing commotion, the anniversary of the Divine advent, therefore her protracted absence afforded no cause of parental uneasiness. But, as it frequently occurs when the mariner parleys in fancied security on the fickle bosom of the mighty expanse, with the elements of nature slumbering in placid serenity around him, a dingy speck in the heavens, of no portentous aspect, suddenly expands and explodes in a horrible tempest, overwhelms his little dominion in a chaos of irretrievable ruin, and buries himself in the foam of the angry surf; so the rational mind, unconscious of evil, often enjoys unruffled tranquillity beneath an invisible tempest of impending woe, and basks in treacherous security on the rugged verge of a dismal precipice. Her father, having wound up his mercantile transactions for the day, and unwilling to retire amid the balmy shades of Morpheus until his daughter's return, was lolling at perfect ease in his elbow-chair, and thawing his weary limbs by the glowing influence of the hearth; when, lo! an imperceptible stupor stealthily usurped an absolute sway over his entire system, mental and physical, only the wakeful fancy, scorning restraint, roamed at random over the entire intellectual empire, displaying her fantastic freaks and performing romantic evolutions. In this listless condition of passive existence, of dormant energy and suspended reason, he dreamed; and, behold! in the visions of the night, his only daughter, the sole pledge of his hymeneal vows, appeared in sad, in rueful prospect before him, not exhibiting the well-trimmed habit, the cheerful

aspect, the buoyant carriage which erewhile she possessed, but all in ghastly dishabille, wringing her hands, tearing her hair, smiting her breast, while the big rolling tears, in rapid succession, streamed from her down-cast eyes. Around her lowered a murky cloud, black and dismal as a tropic thunder-squall, from which emerged an appalling apparition, towering like an antediluvian giant, and hideous as the prince of the Stygian domains. In its one hand, appeared an olive-branch in all its native beauty and peace-speaking loveliness; in the other, the coils of a ponderous chain, in clanking accents, rehearsed the tyrant's creed, and emblemized eternal thralldom. On its one cheek, softly played a smile of angel sweetness; on the other, lowered the horrid frown of a demon; whilst from the breast aperture of the huge black mantle in which the spectre was closely enveloped, the death-fraught head of a serpent kythed itself in distinct protrusion. The dreaming sire continued staring with dread amazement on the wild creation of fancy, until the lurking snake sprang from the ensconcement, and twined its folds around the neck of his fair progeny. At this instant a piercing shriek of misery, "O, my father!" assailed his sleep-sealed ears, broke through his temporary slumber, and dispelled the horrific vision. Thus roused from apparent death, and restored to consciousness in all his faculties, he quietly resumed his shoes from which the aching corns had induced him to disengage his pedestals, and only remarked, in confused accents, "Heeh, lass, I've been dreamin'." Fearing to say more lest the strange impressions of his distorted imagination should create disquietude in the unruffled bosom of his spouse, who was always a ready participant in his troubles, imparting to him the balm of sympathy in all his sorrows; and his sudden exit produced no sensation of wonder, no unpleasant surmise, no torturing pang of

jealousy in the breast of his faithful partner in life. But how soon was this deceitful calm, this treacherous serenity of mind, destined to explode in a tempest of overwhelming despair! Unable to efface from his heart the deep and indelible impressions of the remarkable vision, he sped to the place of concourse, where he most certainly expected to find his beloved daughter in comfortable keeping, and afford his protecting arm in the transference to her parental home. But how heart-rending the disappointment! the habitation of mirth was hushed to sepulchral silence, and dark as the night that surrounded it. The gleesome party had dispersed, in which his lovely Betsy had never been permitted to mingle; and the happy inmates were recruiting exhausted nature with the balm of peaceful repose. Confounded and bewildered, in a gust of horror and amazement, the distracted parent turned round and round; accomplishing a series of fixed, wild, and unnatural revolutions, as if poised on a pivot. He trembled, he would have fled, but he knew not whither. Immured in an ocean of dread perplexity, his desponding thought leaped from one conjecture to another, while the grisly vision, in all its lively horrors, flashed with appalling brilliancy on his rambling imagination. Amid the tempestuous billows of anguish, while the throne of reason reeled to its centre, a lucid interval dawned on the turbulent elements that wrought in the god and governed the man, by which he perceived that concealment of the blue reality from his endearing spouse were a hopeless expedient, reared on the sandy basis of inevitable failure; therefore he paused, resolved, and returned to his unsuspecting partner, whom he had left domiciled in lonely solitude. But what a heart-melting interview! what a scene of wild disorder! what a tempest of dire commotion raged in the seat of parental affections! No alleviating conjecture shed one cheering

ray of hope on the dark prospect of final bereavement ; while the fell remembrance of similar events, that the barbarous memory, in savage sport, recalled from the slumbers of oblivion, imparted additional pungency to the bitter draught. Theirs were not the agonizing twinges of perplexing suspense ; theirs was not the atmosphere chequered with beams of hope and clouds of despair ; but all was wrapt in the settled gloom of hopeless bereavement. Scarce had the glorious universal chronometer accomplished ten revolutions since the public sympathy was aroused, and the gaping wonder of the district excited by a circumstance no less mysterious ; a circumstance with which Betsy's afflicted parents were intimately connected and perfectly conversant at the period of its occurrence—the unfortunate subject of abduction being a young blooming niece of their own, who disappeared on hogmanay, and all inquiry during the lapse of ten years utterly failed to elicit a single trace of the hapless victim. Now officious recollection unfolded that dark postern of vanished time, and exhibited the tragic event renewed in all its forbidding features, as of yesterday ; and the deplorable case of their own beloved offspring assumed an aspect so strikingly similar, as to extinguish every glimpse of solace and banish the last shadow of hope. Still, as a drowning man, with eager grasp, will seize on a floating straw as the means of deliverance, the bereaved couple grasped an alternative equally impotent. The neighbours, awakened by the piercing accents of anguish, and impelled by the irresistible influence of consternation, deserted their dormitories, and rushed to the scene of woe—some actuated by impressions of real commiseration, and others governed by the prying passion of sheer curiosity : all, however, prompted by their several motives, accompanied the cheerless, the disconsolate mourners in their fruitless

search ; and, under the scowling canopy of heaven, every lane and vennel were subjected to an ordeal of scrutiny, until the winter sun, in the far distant horizon, shed a glimmering dawn over the bounding billows of the German Ocean. But like the faithless band who, mid the rugged steeps and mazy wilds, the prophet sought, for whom no place existed in the climes of earth, all returned to their respective abodes, lost and confounded in the haze of wonder, having discovered no trace of aught pertaining to the strayed damsel. But loads press lightly on the shoulders of all save those who are doomed to bear them ; and how keen soever the sensation of wonder that tickled the mind of the public, it was utterly destitute of those acute feelings of insuperable anguish that agonized the hearts and weighed down the spirits of the bereaved parents.

Let us now turn away from this scene of mourning, and revisit the innocent cause of it in her doleful habitation. The morning has dawned with its rich profusion of orient streaks, but unknown to her ; the rising sun shoots his slanting radiance athwart the briny expanse, but no cheering glimpse illumines the dark interior of her lonely prison. Dragged, as it were, beyond the pale of creation, and secluded from the light of heaven, all is blackness around her, as if entombed in the centre of the earth. But though restrained by fetters of brass and secured by walls of adamant, the soul-soaring aspiration, over which the veriest despot on earth possesses no control, can burst the strongest barrier, and ascend to that region where cloud, nor curse, nor care, nor crime can possibly intrude ; and though immured in rayless night, there is a gleam of solace that conscious virtue imparts, which no malignant existence, even the prince of darkness himself, is able to extinguish ; and, in the present instance, the fair captive, in her noxious dungeon, realized the influ-

ence of that internal illumination, alleviating the horrors of that gloom to which she was subjected by the perfidy of man. Whilst wholly abstracted from the frivolities of life, and absorbed in deep and solemn reflection on the severity of fate by which she had been mysteriously deprived of light, of liberty, of social intercourse with the rational world, the comparative serenity of Betsy's bosom was suddenly interrupted by the slight vibrations of the earth, accompanied by a succession of confused sounds conveyed in stifled echoes to her watchful ears. As the vibrations waxed stronger, and the echoes louder, she distinctly perceived, amid the dusk of her musing melancholy, the rapid tread of her heartless oppressor. The throbbing emotions of mingled dismay swelled in her panting bosom, and the chilling sensations of terror shivered in all her veins, while the paleness of death was diffused over her fair, attractive visage. The pulsations of her heart, though quick, were few in number ere the door, unlocked, grated on its hinges, and the unfeeling wretch, with a torch in his hand, presented himself to her bewildered vision. The express purpose of this visitation was merely to ascertain, by her appearance, whether twelve hours durance, drear and dismal, had tamed her spirit of resistance, and brought her within the pale of submission to his vile affections. What a flood of wild confusion overwhelmed the heart and deluged the senses of the lone, defenceless female when she beheld the dreaded object of all her antipathies! How did the flame of virtuous abhorrence rage in her breast when his fiendish treachery flashed upon her thought! how did the whole delicate sensibilities of her soul start up in fierce rebellion against a vassalage so degrading to the rational mind! And when he broke the profound silence, his voice, once admired, assailed her ears like the blood-chilling screams of the owl, that awaken the fears of the timid,

and stir the hair of the night-wrapt traveller. On her countenance, visibly impressed with the indications of disquietude, he threw a glance of affected blandishment, and addressed the unhappy victim of his cupidity in language kind and courteous. But his, she knew, were not the accents of love, that exalted passion which plants perfumes in the sterile desert, bestrews man's rugged path with flowers, and mingles a gleam of transport in the storms of life. Nay; his was the voice of the subtle serpent that lured her primitive parent into the toils of misery—his the fallacious courtesy of the vampire that fans the unconscious victim into cool composure while he preys on its vitals. Therefore, to all his sifting inquiries, his impure insinuations, she maintained a sullen reserve, as wholly occupied in other thoughts; but when he approached into close contact, and put forth his hand in deceitful salutation, she raised her bright blue eyes rolling in tears, that spoke a language to his heart which the most melting strains of eloquence would have failed to imitate—even callous depravity itself reeled on its throne of adamant, and felt the softening glow of sympathy. The monkish despot, in all his impassioned amours, never before experienced such a perplexing frustration of purpose; for as the Bass stands firm and secure on its natural basis, and maintains its original position amid the streams of the Forth despite the furious tempests that rave in the regions above and the tumbling billows that roll in the ocean beneath, alike unshaken stood the invincible fortress of Betsy's virtue. As he turned to evade the heart-piercing poniards of her imploring eyes, he was pursued by the voice of earnest supplication, with which, in his present condition, he could have well dispensed. "O, Father, what have I done? What crime have I committed unawares against my God, or my fellow-creatures, that I am doomed to endure an

ordeal of penance so cruel, so dreadfully severe ? Relieve me, I beseech you, from this valley of death, this dismal abode, this intolerable bondage ; or, in mercy, acquaint my sorrowing parents of the situation in which thy handmaid is placed, ere their bereaved hearts burst with the swellings of anguish. All this, and more than this, I am willing to endure for the Blessed, as an atonement for my guilt, would'st thou but tell me in what it consists. O, Father, do, in mercy, reveal my secret fault ?" In these plaintive accents, the artless breathings of a guiltless soul, were conveyed the poisoned arrows of shame, disappointment, and remorse ; and from the mouth of self-condemning innocence, unconscious of crime, the dire conviction of his own fearful deserts grated on his ear, and thrilled in his heart " wrapt up in triple brass." From her presence he sped with precipitous haste, as a man-slayer to the city of refuge, and shut the door with a slam of fury, leaving the hapless captive again involved in the shades of solid darkness.

That misery, in a thousand shapes, colours, and degrees, actually exists beneath the spacious canopy of heaven, no man, however partially acquainted with himself, will attempt to deny ; and it is no less certain that a vast proportion of that gloomy existence, that stalks with grisly aspect over the diversified regions of the globe, is artificially procured by the very objects destined to endure its severest pressure ; how much mental energy and physical exertion are frequently expended in the accomplishment of aims and projects which result in the very consummation of infelicity ! He sped apace from the presence of his captive, but the speed of an angel would have been too tardy, and the distance of the glorious planets too contracted to have saved him from the soul-harassing annoyance, which he laboured assiduously to procure for himself. Though secured within the ram-

parts of the abbey, and immured in the sacred privacy of his confessional, her supplicating eye still glistened in his view, and her heart-melting accents rang in his ears. Self-accused and self-condemned, he experienced the agonizing twinges of remorse, as if the very flames of perdition were kindling in his breast; while on his perplexed breathings, quivered in trembling accents, "O, that I had wings like a dove!" But, alas! 'twas all but a vain wish, an empty desire, a dead aspiration. Never was man involved in a deeper labyrinth of perplexity—never was human ingenuity warped in a maze so intricate—never were the intellectual faculties of human nature so ravelled in grappling with the most mysterious problem that exists in the wide theatre of creation, than were his in dissolving the knot which himself had wreathed. The liberation of the captive was a monstrous idea from which he recoiled with horror, as such would ultimately result in deplorable exposures which he trembled to contemplate. Another, and more desperate expedient, stirred within the dark regions of depravity, which the fossil wrecks of humanity subsequently discovered within the conventual policies forcibly declare to have been aught but a novel device. But this expedient, however effectual in removing the cause of disquietude, and concealing his criminality from the bright face of the sun, on the present occasion he lacked permission to adopt. There are some minds so peculiarly constructed, that when any one of the inherent passions becomes inflated to the highest pitch of excitement, it exerts a paralysing influence over the entire system—it enervates the powers of the body—it deadens the faculties of the mind, and converts the whole active existence into a mere image of prostrate imbecility. Very differently constituted, however, was the mind of this ecclesiastic. For, though under the sole government, not

of one passion, but a formidable combination of these controlling impulses all screwed up to the highest tone, yet did the system retain perfect possession of all its energies, visible and invisible ; nay, his inventive powers were quickened and invigorated by that very extremity to which he was driven, and by which many would have been reft of all self-possession, and rendered incapable of thought, speech, or action. No sooner had one alternative yielded to the blighting influence of failure, than another, less revolting, though equally effective, flashed with all its vivid lustre on his turbulent fancy. As a milder method by which he might effectually dispose of his rebellious captive, amid the boisterous waves of perplexity, he conceived the stratagem of exiling her to the Island of May, under the false colours of religious melancholy. In that sea-girt locality there existed, at that period, a subordinate convent, governed by a monk of the same order ; and in accordance with the ancient proverb, “*ae cròupie will ne’er pick out anither’s e’e*,” he resolved to commit her to his surveillance, under sentence of perpetual monastic seclusion. Accordingly, the crew of the prior’s yacht, being four in number, emissaries or minions of the convent, were forthwith initiated into the secret purpose of the expedition, and rendered perfectly versant in the whole scheme, by which its successful accomplishment mainly depended. The marine conveyance is ordered to be in readiness at the dead, the silent, the terror-fraught hour of midnight, when all animate nature lies hushed into pacific stillness, and laborious man, jaded with the turmoils of the busy world, sweetly reclines in the lap of repose. And just on the second night of Betsy’s residence in the dark unknown, she was roused in the midst of a horrid dream, by the sudden intrusion of five human figures, all disguised and masked, so that no feature of their visage was discernible except their wild flaming

eyes emitting the fiery flashes of savage resolve. Astounded at this formidable invasion of her solitude, a mysterious inflation of soul, a nervous impulse, like that produced by the power of galvanism, quickened the dormant energies of her entire system ; and starting from the cold, the flinty, the inflexible couch on which reclined her shivering frame, she looked unutterable amazement, still unconscious of her impending fate. Did ever mortal existence stand unveiled in the Council of Pandemonium ? Did ever the visual organs of tangible humanity behold the region of horror, and observe the fiends in convention assembled to devise their schemes of malignity for involving the world in a dire catastrophe ? this very theatre exhibited to the lonely captive a miniature representation of all. In such a situation, alone and defenceless, a visitation so appalling was well calculated to overthrow the firmest tower of fortitude, and subdue the most intrepid, the most invincible heart. One of those earth-born furies carried a dark lanthorn, only sufficient to heighten the horrors of the gloom ; another flourished, in full prospect, a furbished sword, unsheathed, reflecting its glittering terrors in the glimmering rays that partially illumined the mouldy confines of the dusky cell ; the other three approached the quaking inmate, who shrank backward from their terrific addresses, and, being rudely seized (for they were resolute in their purpose), she shrieked aloud and struggled like a hapless dove hampered by the toils of the ruthless fowler, on which the deadly weapon was furiously brandished over her head, which at once proclaimed their hostile mission in a style more expressive than the most thrilling eloquence could have possibly conveyed. But this significant admonition was rendered still more impressive by the point of the weapon coming in smart contact with her throbbing bosom, and the accents of relentless resolve sounding harshly in her ears,

and swearing by the Blessed Virgin that if one whisper escaped from her lips, if one effort of resistance was attempted, her doom was instantly and eternally sealed. Sweet is life to the veriest wretch on earth in the full exercise of reason; therefore, all was mute, motionless, yielding quiescence. No boisterous explosion of anguish, no bitter wailings, no pathetic voice of misery engaged her vocal organs, though dreadful was the tempest of mingled horror and dismay that raged in every region of her breast. In this state of constrained submission, she was rudely conducted, hoodwinked and pinioned, down a strait unknown declivity, and at the termination of which, the sound of a massive gate grating on its hinges introduced to her ears the stilly murmur of the rippling ocean that rolled in peaceful undulations on the pebbled shore. Still, in silence unbroken, she is urged onward by her uncourteous guide, while each reluctant step is accompanied with a convulsed sigh and receding shrink, as the last signals of a decisive plunge into the world of spectres. At length amid the suppressed whispers of her masked retinue, she is firmly folded, not in the soft arms of love, but those of a less delicate touch, and forcibly deprived of all footing, suspended betwixt the earth and the heavens, and ultimately deposited in the prior's yacht like a fettered convict destined for the penal settlements. Ignorant of her situation, and luring with fell surmisings as to the issue of her crooked fortune, the current of her thoughts still flowed in a rugged channel. Although a secret suggestion faintly stirred in her mind, that, were actual destruction the sole design of her persecutors, they might as well have sheathed the sword at once in her bosom, dislodged the principle of vitality, and consigned the bleeding remains to the murky shades of the oblivious tomb, no pleasant theme of contemplation was at all mooted in the councils of reason. In her

immediate vicinity sat, unknown, the reverend cause of all her misery, who appeared to enjoy life not in its most enviable colours ; for, though goaded on by the potent impulses of licentious passion to embark in a stratagem so incalculably base, he seemed not absolutely sunk in the slough of depravity, and his conduct throughout the sequel afforded unequivocal tokens of his inward remorse and pungent relentings ; but, governed by the despotic control of vicious principle, he had proceeded too far in this peculiar drama to effect an honourable exit—he had advanced too far on the enchanted ground, effectually precluding all possibility of extricating himself by retracing his steps. The damsel must needs be disposed of, either by a violent death (from the thought of which his whole soul recoiled with horror), or exile and final seclusion from all intercourse with the rational world.

In paths of vice deceptive blossoms spring,
That only lure the unwary soul to sting.

Now, the splendid yacht is released from her moorings, and the four trusty minions, with nervous vigour, tug at the clanking oars ; and never did the winter sky assume an aspect of more placid serenity—never was the vault of heaven more richly studded with its sparkling gems, untarnished by the floating mist of the lower atmosphere—and never did the streaming waters of the Forth slumber around them with more delightful stillness, more pellucid tranquillity. But instability is stamped in legible characters on every species of sublunary being. Man's brightest prospects frequently vanish like the visions of bliss that sport around the pillow of the hopeful lover, or the golden pyramids of fancy based on the mere quicksands of a day-dream ; and his best concerted schemes, dissolved in the acid of failure, evaporate like the flimsy haze of the morning. The beautiful expanse of the azure

concave, with all its gorgeous splendours, is suddenly obscured by a veil of portentous vapour ; the whispering breath of the atmosphere, changed in current and quickened in motion, comes forth in surly gusts of factious opposition, and the captious element, keenly susceptible of excitement, began to curl its brows, and sensibly evince the scowling indications of anger. These were but the preliminary symptoms, the precursing shadows of a furious onset. The accumulating clouds lowered into solid darkness ; the intermittent gusts increased and united into a raving tempest ; the azure flood, roused from its peaceful slumber, heaves and foams around, and the drifting sleet, in fierce discharge from the magazine of heaven, descends in blending clouds with furious lash on the frail unsheltered expedition. Thus environed with darkness, danger, mingled confusion, and increasing convulsion, the galley-slaves exert their utmost energy to stem the opposing elements, and make head towards the island that still loomed in the distance ; but sinking under extreme exhaustion, and alarmed at the frightful invasion of the rising surf, they resolved to change their course, and regain, if possible, the haven of their departure. Duly weighing the importance of the mission, this appears a desperate alternative, which naught but lawless necessity could have suggested. Still the living source of the monk's disquietude continued within the range of his vision ; and although, in the multitude of his silently revolving thoughts, the malignant whispers of abandoned depravity infused an idea by the adoption of which he might easily affect an immediate deliverance, yet, governed by some secret impulse, his soul recoiled from its embrace. As for Betsy, she was so severely afflicted with the unaccountable disease of sea-sickness, as to render her regardless even of life itself ; and whatever gloomy apprehensions of peril, shipwreck, or death per-

vaded the reflective channels of the other inmates, so far as she was concerned, the storm raged and roared around, and spent its ruthless ire unheeded. The crazy vessel, rendered subservient to the compulsory resolve of dire necessity, now turns stern to the tempest, relinquishes the hopeless contest, and sues for safety only in a well-managed retreat. But where is the goal? where the fortress of security? No star of comfort glimmered in that sable canopy—no luminous beacon shed a hope-inspiring gleam on the shivering night-wrapt souls, lost and bewildered in a wide tumultuous waste of dashing foam—no distinct object appeared in the visual line of pitchy darkness that apparently bounded the snowy surf of the turbulent expanse—no baronial seat of feudal antiquity—no castle, kirk, or convent heaved its familiar head in the murky horizon, proclaiming the fixed locality, and pointing the way to a haven of peace; nay, the only definite prospect that obtruded on the view of those unfortunate beings was a sudden, an inevitable transit beyond the rugged confines of time. Whilst the fragile bark continues wallowing, and all but smothered amid the breach of uproarious waves, every movement of the mariners was left to the random decision of fate, being ignorant of their position, and unconscious of aught save the death-staring perils by which they were encompassed. The oars are still plied with that unknown vigour which desperation rarely fails to communicate, but without any distinctive aim; all their recollective faculties being jumbled into one mass of wild disorder, resembling the scene of frightful commotion that raged and foamed around them, in hoarse discordant murmurs ringing the dirge of thousands.

The boisterous December sky having expended its magazine of destructive elements on the trembling world beneath, the eyelids of the morning oped with a sickly

glance dispelling the shades of a protracted night. It is no less remarkable than true, that both in ancient and modern ages, a curious belief has existed on this coast, that should a man during the space of seven years make a regular excursion along the sea-beach every morning before the sun shows himself above the horizon, he would, at the termination of that period, secure his fortune by discovering some casket of valuable treasure cast on shore by the waves. And under the influence of this peculiar superstition, as a certain cordiner in the neighbourhood was performing his usual aquatic tour, he desried in the dusky twilight some odd-looking bundle snugly deposited in the cleft of a huge projecting ledge of rock. He started backward, supposing that it might be an otter, and flapped his leathern apron to scare the uncouth animal from its entrenchment; but perceiving that it firmly resisted the effects of this impotent terror, his hair began to bristle, an unpleasant chill pervaded his veins, and the fancy, ever awake in all such emergencies, commenced its wild creation. The unknown object appeared not only terror-proof, but assumed an attitude of defiance, and grinned horribly in his face, and rapidly advancing on his position with all the sullen grimace of a hostile spectre. Truly this was no inviting prospect, here was no paradise, no place for parley. Resolution and reaction were born twin-sisters; and under the quickening inspiration of dread, he retraced his steps with more vigour and agility than he was ever before known to possess; while every casual flap of his own apron imparted a fresh impetus to the quaking velocity with which he sped from the grisly object. How indispensably requisite is moral courage to the prosecution of every adventure? for although this undefined something had actually contained the full fruition of all his hopes, the very ideal treasure he so perseveringly pursued, all

was forfeited for lack of sufficient manly fortitude to make a seizure of the subject. The hue-and-cry being set up, all the denizens of the burgh became instantly affected with the mania of consternation; for in every little town, every casualty flies from the one end to the other with a degree of swiftness that would almost rival the electric telegraph. Every heart was full of the mysterious affair, and every mouth blabbed out that such a one had seen—had seen—but what he really had seen, no one could tell. By this time the sun exhibited his ghost-chasing image, and a multitude full of self-inspired courage sallied forth to quench the flame of wonder, or gratify the teasing passion of curiosity. Very little time was consumed in the accomplishment of either aim; for, on approaching the noted locality, the marvellous something resulted not in a baseless illusion of the fancy, not in the flimsy materials of an empty apparition, but a perfect female form in all its tangible reality. Here, ensconced in the cliff, lay the hapless daughter of Eve, drenched and dishevelled, devoid of sense and motion, but still exhibiting the faint symptoms of respiration. Now who is she? and whence came she? formed a compound query of no easy solution. The flickering flames of conjecture pervaded the motley multitude, like wild-fire in a region of furze, long unmoistened by the drops of heaven and scorched by the parching radiance of the sun. At length, one more intrepid than the rest untied the bandage that concealed one-half of her visage, and raising his hands said, "Be the holy Saint Augustine! it's Betsy Smith!" The announcement was received with unhesitating credence, all being perfectly apprized of her mysterious disappearance. Her father did not render himself visible in the general turn-out; for, by reason of the unaccountable bereavement he had so recently sustained, his spirits were too much borne down by an

insuperable pressure of anguish to be actuated by an impulse so vague, terrific rumours of appalling apparitions being at that period of no rare occurrence. But her uncle, having convinced himself of the fact, lost no time in conveying tidings of the strange discovery, judging, by the current of his own feelings under circumstances precisely similar, that even her lifeless remains would afford to the sorrowing parents a species of alleviation. In frantic haste her father sped to the scene of wonder and amazement, where he enjoyed the melancholy pleasure of once more beholding his only child in the land of living men ; and as he clasped her to his bosom, and embraced her icy cheek suffused with the ensigns of death, his agonised soul stirred within him when he perceived her pallid lips quiver with the faint emotions of expiring life. Being restored to the glowing sympathies of parental affection, and the recruiting influence of judicious treatment, her suspended faculties gradually evinced indubitable symptoms of returning consciousness ; and being constitutionally robust, and possessing all the natural vigour of youth, time soon repaired the ravages that privation had effected on her florid countenance, revived the dormant powers of exhausted nature, and rekindled into flame the expiring embers of her buoyant spirit. To attempt a description of the feelings that swelled in the now inflated bosom of her parents in connection with this extraordinary occasion, were utterly vain and futile. No language yet extant is sufficiently pregnant with meaning even to convey the faintest idea of that profound amazement, that exalted satisfaction, that entrancing rapture, which, with glowing fervour and impassioned ecstacy, possessed the soul. But, according to the tradition, all their domestic enjoyments through life were intermingled with wonder and admiration ; for, though Betsy could easily describe how she had been

clerically led captive, immured in a dungeon, transferred thither and exposed in a crazy vessel to the violence of the conflicting elements, yet she was ignorant of her destination, and the ultimate purpose of her abduction; both of which subsequently transpired by means of a faithless menial, who held a subordinate office in the priory and was eminently endued with the inquisitorial principle. What became of the boat and men, and how she was conducted to the rock of refuge, appeared enveloped in a cloud dark as doomsday. From the memorable instant when by some sudden shock she was thrown from her seat amid the foaming surf of the ocean, till she awoke from her stupor in the fostering arms of her mother, all seemed a blank leaf in her history; and will continue forever wrapt up in the shades of inscrutable mystery.

Since Heaven to man assigned his blissful lot,
And Hell seduced, and woman wise would be,
And wise became, what man has tasted not
The baneful fruit of yon forbidden tree !
Why bane exist, where all was bliss beside ?
Where all was life, should aught exist to kill ?
'Twas only bane because by Heaven denied,
And still it lures, because forbidden still.

Its noxious seeds, wide wafted on the winds,
Have found a hold in earth's remotest clime,
Infused fell poison in immortal minds,
And cursed the world in every age of time ;
Mid social life, in virtue's blest parterres,
Where loveliest wreaths around each other twine,
'The tree of vice its treacherous head uprears,
Whose hollow fruits in luring clusters shine.

Fair seems the fruit, but all in fancy's eyes,
And only sweet because command restrains ;
Here perverse man a heaven of charms describes,
So fond of freedom, restive under reins.

In time's first dawn, ere vice engendered woes,
Did man possess the same inquiring soul ;
And in restraint an ardent passion rose
To taste that—guarded by divine control.

All perverse still, restraint desire excites,
Forbidden pleasures wield resistless force ;
Still in the jungle where the serpent bites,
Man courts the pungent apples of remorse.
While earth revolves, the foil of vice may lure
To stings envenomed that shall never cease ;
But virtue's fountain flows for ever pure,
Her ways, though rugged, still are paths of peace.

CHAPTER XVI.

So far as man's exploring researches have extended, every tract of country under the spacious canopy of heaven, whether in ancient or modern ages, has possessed its rivers, its lakes, its fountains of water, to which the genius of superstition has attached certain imaginary virtues. The Ganges, the Nile, the Jordan, have ever been regarded in their respective localities with feelings of profound veneration, not only in the spell-bound ages of antiquity, but they still maintain their exalted status far beyond all the fertilizing streams and rivulets, however pure, that in devious wanderings stray through the regions of the universe, insomuch that the water of the Jordan, still endued with a mystical charm, is transported far beyond its natural precincts for the christening of princes. What mysterious virtue this sacred water is supposed to contain, or what distinguishing qualities those privileged beings are expected to derive from its influence, has neither been sufficiently explained nor manifestly exemplified, notwithstanding the commenda-

tion of royalty in its favour. But implicit confidence in any object of fancy that engages the mind always imparts an agreeable feeling, although the beneficial result expected should never transpire beyond the transparent casement of hope. The Syrian warrior perceived no inherent virtue in the waters of Jordan, enjoyed no internal prospect of any salutary result to be derived from the simple element until he acquired this happy confiding disposition, which lighted up the cheering star of hope, the moving impulse of his subsequent conduct ; and, in countless instances, mere imaginary results conceived in the mind of the fanciful, communicate as high-toned happiness to souls so constituted as he could possibly enjoy under the entire removal of his loathsome malady. But why traverse the distant climes of earth in pursuit of enchanted streams, as if Scotland had been exclusively denounced by nature as a province unworthy of these exalted privileges ? Such indeed were an empty surmise, as remote from the truth as the poles are asunder. Ever since Ossian, wrapt in the blue shades of the heath-clad mountains, sang in Celtic strains the feats of Fingal, the land of the Thistle has always possessed her meandering rivers, haunted by legions of water-spirits subversive of human happiness, and her magical springs, pregnant with peculiar virtues, to which the superstitious fancy has ingeniously attached a salutary charm adapted to every defect incident to imperfect mortals.

It will be readily acknowledged by all, however partially conversant with the historical annals of antiquity, that at a certain period of the world's history, a man's superiority of rank, his moral influence in society, his gloss of respectability, did not, as at present, depend so much on the lengths and breadths of his lands or the gravity of his purse, as on the extent of his lineal descendants, the formidable magnitude of his tribe. And

according to this principle, barrenness was uniformly considered as a real calamity, and regarded as a deep shade of reproach, an uncomely blemish, a repulsive feature in the female character ; and however eminently or splendidly endowed with all the other amiable qualities and accomplishments that ever adorned and shed a polished lustre on the sex, all were tarnished, shaded, and eclipsed by this one hapless infirmity. The lovely unfortunates themselves appear to have been no less disquieted under this peculiar species of ignominy, than were the rougher materials with whom they were united by the tender ties of hymeneal affection ; and agonised in mind on account of this imagined infamy, curious enough were the stratagems sometimes resorted to, and unparalleled the condescension on their part in order to hood-wink the gaze of public scorn — stratagems so naturally repugnant to the female feelings that naught but a heart under the pressure of extreme anguish could have conceived, and naught but the last pitch of desperate resolve, excited by a feeling of overwhelming discomfort, could possibly have executed. All that was lovely in nature, beautiful in art, felicitous in social intercourse, was divested of every charm, reft of every attracting feature, and transformed into a rueful waste of ungainly deformity in the estimation of the being unblest with maternal feeling. Even the shades of death and the vale of oblivion seemed preferable to the sunshine of life with all its enjoyments, under a stigma so foul, a disappointment so galling, and the still more insuperable calamity, the painful apprehension of forfeiting the affection of their lords. As revolving ages transpired from the cloud of futurity, and descended into the dark pavilion of elapsed time and mingled themselves with long-lost events that only loom in the mist of retrospect, though this despotic passion became gradually more

modified in its operations, time has not yet been able to effect its extinction, and it still continues to inflict its unpleasant twinges wherever the cause exists. But to proceed with the narrative. On the Island of May there was (and perhaps still is) a beautiful spring of pure pellucid water, in close connection with, and under the sole government of the convent there, which during the whole of the sixteenth century continued in the full exercise of all its powers and privileges. This spring, which was then under the special cognizance of the officiating monk, is traditionally famous for having possessed the mysterious power of curing female sterility, and converting the unfruitful daughters of Eve into fond mothers and joyous housewives, by washing away the reproach inseparable from barrenness, and conciliating the affections of their spouses, which this unamiable quality was jealously supposed to have alienated or cooled down into listless indifference. This consecrated fountain, involving such marvellous inherent virtues, was only accessible by the venerable conventual invested with holy orders; and the revenues derived therefrom, which were by no means inconsiderable, belonged exclusively to the monastic institution established on the Island under the auspices of the monks of Saint Augustine. About the period here referred to, Scotland in a variety of instances appeared as barbarous and uncivilized as in any previous or subsequent part of her history. On account of the jarring, unsettled condition of the kingdom, the law was loose in its requirements, and still more lax in its execution. Right was lorded over by might, and the unfortunate victims of capricious tyranny were frequently despoiled of property, of liberty, and life itself, without the least shadow of judicial investigation. Such was the distracted condition of society, such the gross perversion of justice, such the unrestrained triumph

of gigantic crime over defenceless innocence, that the hapless objects of baronial jealousy enjoyed as little security against the invading horrors of rapine, plunder, and spoliation, as if they had held an unfortified encampment in the most barbarous island of the South Pacific. All the finer feelings of the mind, the soul-ennobling sympathies that illustrate the character of man, were absorbed in moral turpitude, seared with crime and drowned in barbarism. Under the troubled aspect of these tempestuous elements, how unenviable indeed was the situation of those females afflicted with the disease of sterility, whom fate had destined to endure the withering scowl of baronial tyranny, soured by the acid of progenerative disappointment! If in such cases the consecrated spring, with all its mysterious fertilizing qualities, unfortunately failed in producing a successful result, means were frequently devised by their despotic lords to sever the sacred ties of the hymeneal union; and in what manner soever this barbarous deed was accomplished, justice, debased and perverted, winked at the enormity.

Like every other beneficial institution, this remedial fountain, whose latent virtues were so efficacious in promoting matrimonial felicity, and increasing the human species, behoved to be governed by certain restrictive regulations. Therefore, like the lepers in the olden time, the patients subjected to this regimen were secluded from all social intercourse with the world; even the little seagirt world assigned as their temporary residence. Only the governing ecclesiastic, whose prerogative it was to administer the magical water, was permitted to enter within the confines of that chamber exclusively devoted to ladies of sterile habit; and during the whole series of the renovating treatment, it was specially provided that they should enjoy the solace of being visited by their lords at certain specified periods, lest any chilling sensa-

tion of fancied neglect should damp the natural ardour of the female spirit, and by counteracting the fertilizing principle of the peculiar spring, produce a total frustration of purpose. Whether on account of the limited nature of the accommodation, the scanty supplies of the medicine, or for what other mysterious reason has never been fully ascertained, but only one patient was admitted to treatment at the same period of time ; and at the termination of a certain prescribed course, if symptoms of an interesting character manifested themselves in the person of the patient, the cure was pronounced complete, the purpose fully accomplished, the reproach of sterility cancelled, the alienated affection of her husband reclaimed, and her own hymeneal felicity secured. All these precious, heart-entrancing blessings being actually realized in her experience, through the enchanted influence of pure water, she was again transmitted to the baronial residence of her affectionate spouse with boisterous exhibitions of festive rejoicings and jubilant mirth. But if the adamantine sterility of her nature, and the inherent obstinacy of the disease, were such as to render futile and abortive all the monk's most liberal appliances during the entire medical ordeal, then she was mysteriously disposed of as above hinted, that the orchard of her lord might be replenished with a more fertile vine. Although, in every disease, certain cases resist the influence of the most potent remedies, and the most judicious prescriptions result in total failure, this frequently arises, not from the incompetency of the medicine, but a certain constitutional incapacity in the patient of being actuated thereby ; and though the clerical physician was not always successful in his medical practice, a most remarkable instance of the fructifying properties of this insulated spring is here extracted from the antiquated volume of tradition.

About the beginning of the sixteenth century, the

lovely and beloved lady of a certain baron on the north side of the Tweed was unhappily afflicted with the reproachful disease of barrenness. This unamiable feature in the midst of untarnished loveliness, this one untoward circumstance in connection with a happy union, afforded a continual source of discomfort and teasing perplexity to a couple otherwise happy in the enjoyment of reciprocal affection. In all their excursive rambles over a wide extent of territorial dominion, the disquieting reflection incessantly rankled in their breast that all must recede from their view without a scion of their own, a single pledge of their love, to enjoy the inheritance. With the reckless profligate, the consummate debauchee, the mere man of to-day, such a contemplation weighs like a feather in the whirlwind; but with the being of calm reflective habits, every survey of his splendid demesnes, for which he may have laboured and bereaved himself of rest, is well calculated to exercise a very different influence over the rational affections that exalt humanity beyond the mere dominion of sense. Years rolled away in stealthy silence, and merged into the fathomless ocean of the past. Spring, in its successive returns, breathing its vernal balm on the lifeless progeny of nature, repaired the ruthless ravages of winter. Summer extended its gorgeous coverlet of verdure over the wide-spreading fields and forests, and magnificent parterres, where Flora, shrivelled with age and prostrate beneath the frigid scowl of ungenial skies, exhibited a lovely offspring wearing her identical image. But amid the ever-varying scenery in all its diversified features, amid the perpetual successions visible in the teeming creation, no revolution of the seasons solaced the mind of the baron by presenting to his view a tender twig, a lovely blossom in the likeness of himself. This marred all his enjoyment in the midst of pleasure—this implanted a weed of repulsive deformity amid all the

captivating beauties by which he was environed. Happiness is the name of something in nature that every man eagerly pursues, and the fancied means of attainment are as various as are the distinguishing features of the candidates; and so bewildered is human foresight in the haze of fatality, the thing most prized in desire, the exclusive object of impassioned dotage, is frequently the very instrument of infelicity. And so vehement was the baron's anxiety on account of this sole desideratum, that it appeared quite conspicuous in his varied intercourse with the world; and in consequence whereof, he happened to elicit information respecting the miraculous qualities of this famous spring with which the Key of the Forth was so eminently privileged. And notwithstanding the rugged ways, the intervening tracts of land and water that lay betwixt him and the goal, he deferred not to visit the isolated province, and initiate the monk into the secret purpose of his mission, who, in return, supplied most cheering intelligence connected with the mystical fount, its peculiar tendencies, and happy results; and under the stern resolve to embrace every approved means for the fertilizing of his sterile lady, whilst within the pale of probability, she was forthwith transferred to the island, and consigned to the care, keeping, and medical treatment of the venerable sire.

Upon the accession of James the Fifth to the throne of Scotland, the baron, who had always been a particular favourite of that prince, was exalted by him to the distinguished honour of being one of his personal attendants in a tour over the length and breadth of his dominions. And according to the current adage, "a new besom sweeps clean," such was the enthusiastic reception, such the brilliant demonstrations of loyalty, such the warm-hearted hospitality everywhere manifested, that the progressing movements of the Court, like

the Hebrew camp in the desert, were extremely tardy. The balmy spring conceived its buds, the blazing summer expanded its blossoms, and autumn exhibited its mellow fruits, ere the royal excursion was fully completed. The baron having left his beloved spouse under treatment of a peculiar nature, it may reasonably be supposed, that after such a protracted separation, he would feel an unquenchable anxiety to visit the isolated dominion, where, under the deep shades of retirement and exclusion from the world, she had, for his sake, submitted to such an ordeal of sullen austerity. But the surly blast of bleak November, that despoils the mountains of their verdure, dismantles the forests of their luxuriant foilage, disrobes the gay parterres of the variegated vestments, and diffuses ruin, devastation, and death, over the whole vegetable empire—this fell agent, sweeping with furious scowl the bosom of the northern ocean, roused its swelling energies into direful agitation, and impelled the huge impetuous billows that rolled and foamed and dashed in dread commotion around the basis of the island, rendering all access utterly impracticable—this elemental warfare yielded to no armistice during fourteen days, effectually barring all communication with the mainland on either side of the Forth, an event by no means of rare occurrence. The tempest having considerably abated, the baron, who had all the while been kept a storm-bound prisoner in the town of Dunbar, spending his days and nights in miserable anxiety, embarked with all dispatch in a crazy vessel for the residence of his spouse; but, while stepping on board, all glowing with the fire of impatience, he stumbled and fractured his thigh. In consequence of this untoward event, he was reconducted to his residence in Dunbar, and the vessel dispatched to the island with a warrant to transfer the lady from thence, that her husband might

enjoy the benefit of her kind offices and soothing sympathies under the effects of the accident. This warrant, however, was virtually contemned by the monastic official, on the alleged ground that the patient had not fulfilled her assigned period of probation ; and therefore such a request could not be conceded without infringing the regulations of the institution. A memorial on the subject having been presented to the King, she was ultimately removed by virtue of a royal mandate, after ten months' seclusion from the gay society in which she was accustomed to mingle ; during which period her eyes had never been permitted to behold the object of her warmest affections, except in the vague illusive visions of fancy while reason slumbered. Misfortune it is said, seldom comes single-handed. So ardent was the lady's desire to derive salutary benefit from the fructifying spring, and so continuous and copious her libations, that she was restored to her husband exhibiting in her person the prominent symptoms of dropsy.

As silent time revolved, that busy agent, ever revealing profound secrets, expounding abstruse predictions, and changing the aspect of all sublunary existence, the baron advanced in convalescence, and with his loving spouse, was again transferred to his own patrimonial demesnes. The gorgeous grandees of the district apace resorted thither, borne on prancing coursers and in jumping chariots ; and never was the ancient baronial seat rendered the theatre of a drama so curious, a medley so uncouth. For while the squires were lavish in their expressions of gratulation on account of the baron's recovery, the ladies were profuse in their soul-subduing strains of condoling sympathy, on account of the incurable disease that manifested itself in the person of the baroness. The progressive symptoms of the malady became more and more apparent, while the delicate figure of the

patient, all marred in symmetry, increased in shapeless magnitude; and ere the feathered warblers of the grove, in cheerful concert, hailed the return of spring, ere the dormant woodlands, controlled by the frigid sceptre of Siberian death, displayed the vernal ensigns of reviving nature, what were the visual organs of the royal favourite destined to behold? What? His bosom friend, the solace of all his anxieties, writhing in the agonies of dissolving nature? Her soft seraphic voice, that erewhile ravished his ears with the melody of song, absorbed in the wailings of anguish? Her guileless bosom, ever glowing with the fervour of affection, convulsed with the final throb of expiring life? Her whole active frame lulled into passive prostration, and her lively visage mantled over with the pale ensigns of mortality? No! How very different the consummation! how reverse the scene that greets his bewildered vision, and salutes his astonished ears! No ghastly wreck of humanity supplied a repulsive feature to his prospect. The result of the mortal disease swelled not the dark records of death, but told in the annals of life; cured of the deadly distemper produced by the inherent qualities of the fructifying spring, the baron beholds his lady rescued from the vale of oblivion, her corporeal proportions restored in all their wonted comeliness; while suffused with smiles and blushes, blended in beauteous confusion, she rolls the sprawling innocent in a mother's bosom. Twelve months had well-nigh revolved since he committed her to the medical treatment of the convent, and this marvellous achievement appears to have been accomplished solely by the mysterious influence of the water, without the agency of man. Certain misgivings, however, respecting this supernatural affair seemed evidently stirring themselves in the baron's mind, which, if allowed to strengthen and expand, might be productive of serious

consequences. This cloud of ominous materials that fluctuated in the region of his mind, her ladyship possessed sufficient depth of penetration to perceive, and prudential sagacity to avert. She belonged to a family whose influence was extensive and commanding. Her father was on the right hand of King James the Fourth at the battle of Flodden, and was unfortunately mingled with the hapless carnage of rank and distinction consequent on that event; and being perfectly aware of the place that her connections occupied in the breast of the royal successor, and that it was solely on her account that the baron was exalted to a situation of such eminence in the Court, she deferred not to apprise his Majesty of the extraordinary circumstance, through the medium of a confidential ambassador. His Majesty having seriously weighed the peculiar affair in all its irremediable bearings and disastrous consequences, exerted all his ingenuity to avert the unpleasant result of a judicial inquiry. However criminal the position in which the lady was involved, he felt perfectly satisfied that the whole blame was attachable to the baron himself, for having indulged a pet foible to such unlimited extent, and exposing the wife of his bosom to a spell of enchantment. There is a gullible vein in the breast of every man, however humble or exalted the sphere which he occupies in the theatre of existence; and the only difficulty consists in discovering its accessible point, and striking it with effect. The King, being forewarned of the gathering storm, accoutred himself with proper weapons for the attack so soon as the affair should be mooted by the capricious baron; and having surveyed the most vulnerable approach to this peculiar vein, played his cards in a most ingenious manner, insomuch that the king-ruled, priest-gulled, witch-deluded soul became conversant with a system of natural philosophy, of

which, till then, he enjoyed the unruffled bliss of total ignorance ; philosophy so abstruse, so interwoven with marvellous shades of impervious mystery, that the soaring, diving, exploring science of the nineteenth century has not yet been able to comprehend its natural bearing or rational basis. But ignorance of the governing principles of any branch of science can never be admitted as an ostensible proof of its fallacy, otherwise there are many visible occurrences in the natural world which exhibit a mere visionary existence. For instance, the influence of the magnetic needle is fully known and duly appreciated as an indispensable instrument in facilitating human adventure, yet, how few, if any, though fully conversant with the fact, whether among the ancient or modern classics, can assign an obvious reason why it points towards the north, why it deviates more or less from that cardinal point in different regions of the globe, and why to the right or left in different ages of the world ? These are effects perfectly familiar to scientific observation, and cannot possibly be esteemed fabulous, simply because the source whence they proceed appears obscured by the mists of uncertainty. Now, by this new system of philosophy, the baron clearly perceived that any sterile lady drinking copiously of the consecrated water, supplied by the hands of the hallowed conventual, in the full belief of its efficacy, and having her affection ardently fixed on the husband of her bosom, may be rendered fruitful by the operations of fancy, apart from all other agency, and may produce a perfect similitude of Adam, though secluded from all mankind in the sacred solitude of a convent. This principle of procreation, though not fully comprehended by all, is not to be regarded as a romantic theory, based on the quicksands of imposture, being proved by repeated experiment. And the casualty, as exemplified in the present instance,

however astounding to the baron, was no singular occurrence in the history of that mysterious life-giving spring. However extensively the fame of this fructifying fountain may have been disseminated over the various tracts of Caledonia in the days of ignorance, superstition, and monkish delusion, it still holds a prominent name on the East Coast of Fife for its marvellous qualities; and whenever, amongst the constantly unfolding secrets of futurity, a human being of dubious parentage exhibits itself on the stage of existence (a circumstance by no means so rare as a Christmas butterfly), the common remark is still familiar to all, that "It has come from the Island of May."

However much the baron's mind was impressed with this novel species of natural philosophy, a secret thought incessantly revolved in his mind, that although the innocent was evidently the offspring of its mother, it could not possibly be the son of its reputed father, the genuine pledge of matrimonial affection. And though incompetent to resist the formidable phalanx of fallacious logic that battered down his intellectual fortress, he evinced a degree of chariness in the indulgence of a peculiar whim, harmless enough in itself. He most cordially called the child after his own name, but super-added the surname of Drinkwater; and it is not at all improbable that to this very circumstance may be traced the origin of that surname still extant.

It appears evident that surnames, though they existed in Britain several centuries previous to this period, their introduction is comparatively modern when contrasted with the history of the world; and in their primitive application they seem to have had a special reference to certain distinct appearances, qualities, or circumstances connected with the beings to whom they were originally applied, as we find exemplified in cases of much greater

antiquity. It cannot reasonably be supposed that surnames pervaded the British empire as instantaneously as the beams of the sun illumine the concave of heaven, but their general dissemination was effected by a gradual process, that has continued through the lapse of centuries, and still continues its operations at the present day. To describe the manner in which this interminable multiplication of names is accomplished, might be considered an infringement of the rules of politeness, therefore it is respectfully waved, and left to the spirit of inquiry. But although these names originally derived their existence from certain personal contingencies, the changes incident to a long series of genealogical successions have, in a vast variety of instances, rendered them wholly inapplicable to those who acknowledge them, presenting many curious contrasts, and affording ample evidence to the external senses that there is literally nothing in a name. It is no rare occurrence in the world now-a-days to see associated with the name of Black, a family delicately fair, and with White, a race of apparent malattoes; with Short, men of gigantic stature, and with Long, a pedigree of pigmy dwarfs; with Grave, a man of electric spirit, a jesting, merry-Andrew, and with Bright, the very personification of sombre sullenness; with Coward, a man of intrepid enterprise, and with Courage, a being who trembles at his own shadow; with Portly, a walking skeleton, a ghastly image of death, and with Drinkwater, the plump rosy aspect of a wine-biber. Thus and thus, by innumerable examples of striking contrast, it may be clearly perceived that whatever agreement subsisted between names and their owners when originally united, in these latter times they virtually deny all affinity to each other. Howbeit, they are still convenient marks of distinction, by which an individual in any civilised community may

be singled out from amongst the mass of humanity, without ascending a tedious ladder of ancestral descent in order to trace his identity, as in the more obscure ages of the world's history, a system which is now rendered utterly impracticable in consequence of the indiscriminate amalgamation of all tribes, tongues, and nations. Besides, there are multitudes intermingled with every generation, whatever be their talents, their wealth, their influence, their status in society, whose lineal descent can be traced back to no other source than the fructifying spring on this little island, or to some other incident in nature equally endued with fertilizing powers and principles. According to the tradition, the baron and baroness lived in perfect harmony for a long period of years subsequent to this remarkable event, but this solitary being of aquatic parentage comprised the total amount of their progeny. Hence, it may be rationally inferred that he, and not she, was the fittest subject for the mysterious influence of the fructifying water, as the reproachful disease of sterility evidently appears to have been interwoven with his own constitution.

When connubial love, 'mid the shades of the grove,
Reposed in the bosom of peace,
Or basked in the beams, by the crystalline streams,
That flowed in the garden of bliss ;
The new-wedded pair, by a hapless affair,
Having forfeited favour and life—
The man, to his shame, though himself was to blame,
Ascribed the whole guilt to his wife.

And though ages have rolled since the tale was first told
(Though the fact may at times be denied),
His descendants have ne'er, or the case is but rare,
Their grandfather's likeness belied.
'Mid fortune's sly snaps, and the varied mishaps,
That stir matrimonial strife,
What man's such a fool as to blame his misrule ?
Nay—he rolls all the blame on his wife.

CHAPTER XVII.

AMID the unbounded variety of prominent objects that here and there, in every quarter of the peopled universe, strike the excursive organs of vision, there are none so peculiar but may have been equalled—none so magnificent but may have been outrivalled in splendour—none so ancient but its origin may be traced to some definite period of time. Nor can it be conceived of aught in the visible creation, wearing the stamp of human ingenuity, that it was produced without any design, based in no remarkable event, and intended to subserve no purpose but that of cumbering the face of the world. Nay, yon rugged pile of antiquated art now crumbling beneath the sceptre of “all-subduing time,” wrapt in a mantle of creeping ivy, and smothered in the mass of vanished centuries, once was a castle of security, an invulnerable defence against the storms of war. Behold, in yon sequestered glade, the roofless walls, the shattered relics of masonic art, immured amid the leafy umbrage of aspiring elms that still survive the ravages of time! These hoary traces of an ancient fane, bending beneath the pressure of accumulated ages, possess no attractive feature to engage or abstract the mind, except the striking symptoms of cloud-wrapt antiquity, which rarely fail to inspire the contemplative mind with a feeling of reverential awe. This dilapidated edifice, however ancient, admits that there was a time when it had no place in the universe, and that it neither dropt from the clouds above nor sprang from the earth beneath, but was planned in the heart of man, to commemorate some signal deliverance from the wrath of his own species, or the fury of the subservient elements. The tapering spires, the sculptured columns, the monumental towers,

whose lofty summits chequer the altitudes of space and heave their crowning images into the clouds of heaven, all in majestic silence tell the wondering thousands that incessantly emerge from the depth of rayless futurity, for what purpose their exalted status is maintained in the world. This recalls from oblivious darkness the inflexible patriot, whose life and energies were engaged in promoting the best interests of his country; and though exposed to a thousand perils by the jealousy of irresponsible power, in whose bosom naught but the chill of death could extinguish the flame of philanthropic love. And *that*, in yonder void, records the star of genius, the man of splendid endowments, whose ideal flights extended far beyond the ordinary sphere of mortals—whose exploring research ransacked the ocean of mystery and unlocked the hidden recesses of nature, or whose vivid flashes of intellectual fire, blazing in the literary horizon, attracted the gazing wonder of an admiring world. Here, in the busy theatre of bustling concourse, the stately cone lifts its aspiring head, surmounted by a statuary image of the man of valour, the man of war, the man of blood—the man whose intrepid prowess, whose contempt of peril, privation, and death, had signalled him in the field of sanguinary conflict, and achieved the freedom, the glory, the peace of his insulted country. And there, in humble, in modest magnificence, the awe-inspiring memento that proclaims the hero of peace, the man whose dauntless soul, arrayed in the panoply of heaven, opposed the vicegerents of hell, condemned the torture of the flaming faggots, and in the blest enjoyment of unshrinking principle, expired a martyr to imperishable truth.

Thus, all these distinguished features that diversify the wide theatre of creation, are the progeny of design, are based in a definite purpose, have a theme to sing, a

tale to unfold, an aim to accomplish. And when the excursive eye, in traversing the gloom of night, comes in contact with yon luminous tower that lights the entrance of the Forth, the fancy can conceive a period when it had no existence, and the island was only discerned as a dingy speck amid the foam of the ocean. And though the present object, fraught with such essential importance to the nautical world, was preceded by another and another during the lost ages of the past, the primitive beacon, that first shed a grateful beam on the benighted mariner, is still recorded by tradition in connection with the remarkable event from which it is said to have derived its existence.

The Forth was dark and drear,
The howling tempest roared;
No ray of light to cheer
The quaking souls on board.

The bark in sunder rent,
One soul alone survived;
And from this dark event
Was light at first derived.

According to the somewhat variable tradition, the Island of May, about the end of the fifteenth century, as well as subsequent to that period, was included in the lordship of Thirdpart in the parish of Kilrenny. Scotland, through all its diversified regions, was at the time here referred to a turbulent theatre of incessant commotion; and no department of society, from the reigning sovereign to the humblest peasant, could safely calculate on one moment's security. On the one hand, the ceaseless incursions of foreign enemies, with all their crimson horrors, infused distraction into every vein of the social constitution, and kept the national pulse forever throbbing with feverish excitement. And on the

other, the civil feuds, the ravages of unprincipled ambition, the pestilent elements of faction, and the plundering invasions of lawless might on the tenure of defenceless right, that ever and anon distracted the internal peace of the realm, supplied exhaustless fuel to the fire of jealousy and district-terror that raged with unquenchable fury in every domestic circle. Amid the harassing disquietude that overspread the land, the East Coast of Fife was by no means blest with exclusive freedom from deeds of rapine, spoliation, and concerted murder—revolting deeds which heraldry still exhibits in emblazoned glory, and sculpture tells in pompous phrase, the pride of ancient barbarism, the disgust of modern refinement. In consequence of some of those feudal outrages then so prevalent, there subsisted a deep-rooted enmity betwixt the laird of Thirdpart and one of his contiguous neighbours, that neither time nor mediatorial interference was able to eradicate. And it was only a want of confidence on the part of both in respect to the power and magnanimity of their vassals that prevented the final extermination of the one or the other. Their progenitive descendants were restricted by the stern decrees of fate to a very limited number. Thirdpart had but one only son, whom we shall here name Josiah; and the other had a son, and daughter, the latter answering to the name of Amelia. These two families appear to have contracted a juvenile intimacy, which gradually acquired strength and indissoluble stability as they increased in years. In the sprightly days of thoughtless youth, unharassed with the carping cares that chequer the lot of humanity, they frolicked away the pleasant hours of sunshine, in the bushy wilds and sequestered retreats, amongst the feathered warblers, nestling in artless simplicity like themselves. Barons may quarrel at the shaking of a leaf, or the turning of a straw, and involve

an entire district in the shades of irreparable mischief; potentates may contend for a bauble, and at their imperative nod convert whole nations into a scene of appalling anarchy, and deluge the soil that sustains them with the blood of its lords; but in this little group, this simple representation of human happiness, no factious jealousy discomposed the serenity of the soul; no conflicting interests disquieted the breast; no envenomed passions brutalized the image of divinity; all resembled cords of a well-tuned instrument, where no discordant tone, with grating sound or uncouth jingle, marred the blissful harmony of innocent delight. They were ardently emulous of each other, but their strife proceeded not from the morbid principle of ungenerous selfishness that governs man in his riper years, and too frequently transforms the beauteous creation into a jungle of repulsive deformity. Thus, all was purely controlled by a vieing anxiety to excel in communicating the brightest glimpses of happiness, the most brilliant flashes of unsullied enjoyment. How very different would the aspect of this prostrate world appear were this principle the main-spring of the universe, the balance-wheel of actions, the moving impulse of the human soul. Alas! it is all a fleeting shadow, an empty chimera, a baseless phantom of the wild imagination; such may obtain a footing in the bright lunarian realms of Utopia, but the climate of this dingy planet is too variable, the atmosphere too cloudy, too frigid, for maturing so delicate a fruit. Even in this little group, however desirous to communicate happiness to each other, there existed the unamiable disposition to inflict suffering on their inferiors; the somewhat cruel predilection manifested by boys in all ages for plundering and destroying the instinctive habitations of the defenceless plumy tribes, exercised a despotic sway over the minds of those otherwise inoffensive beings. But

these tiny subjects of the winged creation had a powerful advocate, a prevailing intercessor, in the person of the little lovely Amelia. And her pathetic appeals, flowing from a heart glowing with the genuine fervour of pure benevolence and unaffected sympathy, invariably succeeded in melting down the ravaging asperity that such a ruthless predilection is ever calculated to engender. Amelia and her brother were born twins, and Josiah being about the same age, the entire trio presented a most striking similarity both in person and features; and in consequence of which incident, they, by secretly exchanging their upper garments, frequently played off amusing tricks upon each other. The unclouded years of playful innocence stole silently away into the dark concealment of the past, and their retiring shadows but dimly appeared in the misty horizon of retrospect. Still the unruffled harmony of friendly intercourse continued to pervade this happy society in the more rational pursuits of maturer age, being either unaware or utterly regardless of the mutual antipathy that rankled in the breast of their fathers. As the ceaseless revolutions of time began gradually to unfold the latent qualities of the mind, and display the intellectual blossoms that slumbered in embryo, Josiah and Amelia became every day more lovely, more amiable in the eyes of each other. The soft whispers of love, like the balmy zephyr, poured their life-sweetening tones into the youthful ears; while the silken sinews of the tender passion, blended with the ties of friendship, wrapt the unsuspecting hearts in the toils of a willing thralldom. As the generous flame glowed with increasing ardour, all the glories of the firmament, the riches of the world, the beauties of creation became concentrated in the lovely Amelia. Every prospect however bleak, every scene however rugged, was converted into an elysium of bliss when cheered by her

presence and enlivened by her smiles; both having attained to that particular climax of fervent existence when the heart is most susceptible of this peculiar feeling, and least capable of being swayed by sordid considerations, it exercised a remarkable influence over every thought, word, and action, and controlled the entire demeanour of its glowing subjects. With affections thus governed, every splendid entertainment wore the aspect of monotonous sameness, every pleasure was insipid, every enjoyment stale and destitute of relish, when apart from the presence of each other. The pure principle of friendship ever exhibits a bold, a confident, an unblushing front, regardless of public gaze as unnoticed in the crowding world; but love, that nondescript passion from which few rational minds are exempt, with shy retiring mien, shrinks from the glance of human observation, and courts the sequestered haunts of irrational nature; nay, there is a species of jealousy, coeval with the first inspiration of this tender something, that operates so powerfully in the last and noblest work of creation, and the beings blest with the delicate feeling of love no sooner experience its grateful warmth diffusing itself through the avenues of the soul, than they conceive a teasing surmise that all the world is aware of it, while as yet confined exclusively to their own breast, and hid in the secret recesses of the heart. Hence, timid love, however untarnished its robes of innocence, has always been found resorting to obscure ravines, sequestered rivulets, umbrageous groves, and unfrequented solitudes—scenes most congenial to its nature; and thus courting retirement, it frequently discovers itself by the very means adopted to ensure concealment.

Josiah and his lovely angel, all but adored, now began at stolen intervals to seek delightful retirement amid the deep seclusion of the shady woodlands, where the mavis

chanted among the boughs, and the blackbirds mellow notes, in sweet resounding echoes, shivered through the dusky thicket. And here it was that they enjoyed the short hours of love's entrancing converse beyond the prying scrutiny of inquisitive man. But the blest enjoyment of this favoured retreat, like earth's primeval paradise, was destined to transient existence; and the fell demon of misfortune, ever subversive of human happiness, involved the youthful pair in a hapless labyrinth of rueful miseries. 'Twas on a beautiful summer's eve, while the sun was yet exalted in the azure firmament, as they were enjoying their secret, their soul-transporting walk beneath the shady umbrage of the forest, and all absorbed in one engrossing theme—sudden as the meteor flits across the heavens, or the electric bolt darts from the lowering cloud, an ungracious intruder surprised their vision, and marred their felicity. Fickle Kate, the poultry wife at Thirdpart, happened to be scouring the woods in pursuit of fuel as a by-stand for future necessity, in imitation of the industrious bee providing against the severity of winter, and, guided by some invidious power, ever strewing the path of humanity with thorns of disappointment, she bolted unawares from a bushy arbour in the immediate province of their endearing intercourse, and presented her well-known, unwelcome figure in full prospect. From the manifest symptoms of dread confusion portrayed in their blushing visages, Kate, being no novice in the tactics of love, clearly perceived that she had trespassed on sacred ground, and that her presence was anything but desirable. "The good Heaven bless ye, bairns," said she; "ye needna leuk sae fleyed at me, as gif ye'd stoun a score o' sheep. Na, na, it winna houd; I ken fu' weel, ye may as weel try to houd yon sun i' the lift, as gar me trow that ye loo nae ane anither. Ye needna blush, bonnie lassie, an' bury

yer face i' yer gebbie, for I've seen the day when I'd been as blyde amang the bushes as ye are. I ken a' about it, but I'll ne'er leet on." This gratuitous pledge to secrecy on the part of the henwife inspired the timid lovers with a glimpse of fortitude, and each drawing out a pretty little purse, tendered her a bonus as a silver chain to bind her unruly member, which she gratefully accepted and withdrew. This secret, however, by sheer mischance committed to Kate's keeping, proved too weighty a bolus for her fickle stomach to retain. It rolled and weltered like a bull in a net, and gnawed like a vulture at her heart-strings, insomuch that her daily routine of duties was tardily performed, and sleep, with all its balmy odours, was banished beyond the pale of her eyelids. This peculiarity in Kate's disposition is by no means to be considered a singular prodigy in nature, for beings in both sexes have ever existed in the human family on whom temporary misery cannot be more effectually inflicted than by making them honoured custodiers of a secret, however trivial. The self-complacent idea of possessing the knowledge of something whereof all the world is ignorant, the restraining influence proceeding from a species of superficial integrity, and an irresistible desire to communicate, all combined in one little soul, render life a severe purgatory of griping disquietude, till blest with a favourable opportunity of divulging, which is always embraced with ardour. Kate having sustained this ordeal of endurance for several tedious days, its intolerable pressure at length subdued her resolution, and chafed the cord of fidelity which herself had spun amid the shades of the forest. Being now fully determined to eject the troublesome tenant from the region of her breast through the medium of her vocal organs, and having collected her lap full of eggs as a passport to the family mansion, off she set, stalking in

all the assumed importance of a royal secretary ; but, just as she crossed the threshold, some unlucky article tripped one of her sturdy pedestals, capsized the secretary, and committed dreadful havoc amongst the brittle commodity ; the domestics resorted *en masse* to the scene of the accident, and having gathered together her scattered members, her listless length was again restored to the appearance of something resembling a perpendicular. But Kate having damaged the most prominent feature of her visage, which was of no ordinary dimensions, her hoary haffets seemed beautifully streaked with crimson spangles ; no other part, however, of her significant phiz was at all injured, the stately organ having acted as a safeguard for all the rest of the surrounding territory ; but whether the upper or nether storey of Kate's towering altitude presented the most ludicrous aspect, would have puzzled the most acute vision to determine ; the one being a picture diversified with the varying shades of nature pertaining to itself, and the other, richly besmeared with the parti-coloured contents of the smashed ovals. Meanwhile one of the minions of his honour, who laboured under a stuttering impediment, rushed upstairs, and proceeded to acquaint him that Kick-Kick-Kate had fif-fif-fa'n an' bib-bib-broken her ——. " Well, make speed—get the doctor—and I'll see by-and-bye." Knowing that every command was peremptory, he sped apace to execute the order he had received, and from the confused manner in which the message was delivered, the son of Esculapius, actually concluding that the woman had broken her legs, provided himself with the apparatus necessary on such occasions, and started off with all possible despatch to the scene of suffering. On his arrival, panting for breath and suffused with perspiration, he experienced much difficulty in suppressing the emotions of chagrin that swelled in his breast, when

he discovered that no fracture, simple or compound, had happened to the legs of any one, eggs alone being the principal sufferers in the catastrophe. The case was too complex for all his scobbing apparatus to remodel into aught resembling the original form ; he even declined to examine Kate's nasal promontory, perceiving that its extremity was already ornamented with a stripe of white plaster, kything like a wreath of snow on the summit of the Andes. His honour, being relieved from his private engagements, now bestirred his stumps in order to look narrowly into the disastrous affair ; and observing Kate, with her ornamental beak, standing erect like a Maypole, he could not forbear smiling at the misconception under which he had laboured with regard to the consequences of the accident ; when the queen of the poultry commenced a deplorable harangue respecting the fate of the eggs, insinuating at the same time that she had tidings of a most important nature to communicate, and that the wreck of the eggs was merely a prelude to a more insuperable calamity. Eggs are always ominous of evil when placed in connection with love, and before lovers would dream of henwives or see eggs in vision, they would rather dream of the hangman and see the cloven foot of the old serpent. The laird, perceiving that some event of a serious character was indicated by the peculiar longitude of Kate's foreboding aspect, took her aside into a private apartment in order to discover the momentous substance whereof the ominous shadow so conspicuously appeared. Her mind being literally agonized by the pressure of the secret, and unable any longer to wallow with the load, she speedily communicated what her twa een had witnessed amang the growin' timmer, and her ain convictions o' the unco fykiness begun to kythe itsel' atween Josiah an' that little fônd cuttie ovr by there ; an' she weened fu' weel be her ain ken, that sic fykin'

was just like a snaw ba' rown down the brae, the langer it rows it waxes aye the bigger an' heavier. Kate being thus delivered of the painful secret, and pregnant with a bumper of wine, stalked off with a satisfied air to resume her duties as governess of the feathered fraternity, little knowing the quantum of human misery her supple tongue had been instrumental in creating. All the virulent passions that reigned and rankled in the laird's despotic bosom now stirred and mustered in dread rebellion at the very idea that the spawn of his most inveterate adversary should one day possess that identical mansion. In the fury of frantic indignation, he stamped and stalked from one apartment to another, while his huge, black eyes rolled and flashed in wild terrific menace. This tempest of excitement had barely passed the climax of its violence, when Josiah entered, all unsuspecting, cheerful, and happy, full of the image of his lovely Amelia, and his heart still glowing with the parting embrace; but what a chilling reception—what a reverse current of feeling—what a freezing transition from the bland smiles of love to the frigid scowl of envenomed passion, was he destined to endure! The legal alternative of denying the fact, however beneficial in many cases, in the present instance proved utterly abortive. The unpardonable crime of loving an enemy bewrayed itself in a suffusion of crimson blushes, which the arch ingenuity of the incensed accuser distinctly perceived; therefore, the self-condemned captive in the toils of Cupid, swayed by modest diffidence, betook himself to silence, while the vengeful tempest of indignation raged with alarming fury, and the appalling threats, involving present disgrace and future misery, like ponderous hail-stones, rattled about his ears. But as the angry elements of nature frequently wreak their vengeance on the desolate wilderness unheeded by mortals, in like manner did

this moral hurricane expend its fury on the hopeful youth, and exhaust itself into a calm without subduing the heaven-born flame, or chilling the fervour of that endearing influence which glowed in his bosom; the thrilling emotions of his heart, the pure emanations of nature, were such as neither a sense of filial duty nor the sterile frost of despotism was able to control.

Kate, having enjoyed the glorious gratification of first revealing the secret at head-quarters, now became extremely liberal, treating all and sundry with the news of her momentous discovery. So the father of Amelia became acquainted with the ire-stirring tidings of the love-suit on the selfsame day that Kate broke her voluntary pledge of secrecy, and the unwitting, light-hearted girl, in all the blushing modesty of her teens, was subjected to an ordeal of ruthless rage and rigid scrutiny, similar to that which her beloved Josiah was compelled to endure; but her softer nature, and more delicate feelings being less capable of sustaining the relentless tempest of paternal wrath, she concealed her lovely visage, flushed with the lustre of bashful innocence, and shed a flood of expressive tears, tears not of compunction, contrition, regret, or remorse, the precursory symptoms of an important change of heart, or the consequent shadows of some decisive revolution accomplished in the seat of the affections, but the simple evidence of a virtuous attachment of heart beyond the power of parental authority to dissolve. By the stern decree of relentless fate, or the malignant passions of man, they may be precluded from enjoying the presence of each other, but no human interposition, however barbarous, could sever the ties of that ardent affection by which their hearts were closely united. Seldom, indeed, does virtuous love enjoy a horizon wholly unchequered with clouds and unruffled with storms. And this truth began

to be amply realized in the experience of Josiah and his beloved, who passed perhaps their first night of sleepless inquietude unknown to each other, or to the slumbering world around them ; still, reckless of all consequences, and resolved to brave the utmost effects of paternal displeasure, they duly respected their parting pledge and the trysting-tree. Josiah was first on the enchanted ground, his love having taken a circuitous route to evade the jealous glance of her father ; but as soon as she approached within the range of vision, he clearly perceived the shades of a troubled spirit portrayed in every feature of her countenance. Mutual explanations having been given, Josiah evinced a determination to be avenged on the fickle henwife for her treacherous baseness, but from this purpose he was easily dissuaded by Amelia, as an alternative that might be productive of suffering to himself without accomplishing any good end. When unexpected difficulties arise in the path of the conqueror, they only tend to render his heroic spirit more resolute, and love, when crossed, often exhibits a firmness and intrepidity, which, while gliding down the smooth stream of ordinary life, it is seldom known to possess. Here they vowed eternal fidelity, despite the gloom of the moral atmosphere by which they were surrounded, and regardless of the raving hurricanes of wrath, or the hot thunderbolts of indignation that threatened to burst with overwhelming vengeance on their devoted heads.

The father of Amelia, perceiving that his remonstrance was ineffectual, his authority disregarded, and his threats contemned, and being a man of arbitrary disposition, seared by the petrifying influence of crime, meditated the destruction of a being who had offended him in no particular, except in loving his daughter. And when a mind, however dull and insipid in ordinary matters, is guided by satanic agency, it is amazing with what prompt-

titude stratagems are planned and executed. He knew full well the friendship that subsisted betwixt his son and the loving object of his hatred and revenge; and, being apprised of a hunting match on which they were soon to embark, he matured his devilish design, and panted in breathless anxiety for its melancholy result. The favourable season arrived; he descried from an attic window the two happy youths scampering over the plain with all the buoyancy of mountain deer, whilst his daughter, with stretched neck and staring earnestness, was watching their motions with an air and aspect pregnant with meaning. The callous old squire, inflated with malice, and the very flames of perdition raging in his breast, plunged into the woody thicket, with no other companion save the arch-fiend goading him on to his malignant purpose. Under this umbrageous covert he lay in ambush, armed with the messenger of death, till, through the dusky vista, he beheld the sportive youths advancing on his position. He aimed, nor aimed in vain—the youth fell prostrate, groaned, and expired. Having thus added another item to his black catalogue of delinquencies, he returned to his mansion, cherishing an infernal glow of satisfaction; he had now put a final period to that obnoxious intimacy so repugnant to his mind. But it frequently occurs in the course of this world's events, that schemes devised by misanthropic souls to mingle bitter ingredients with the social condition of man, redound to the confusion of their authors; and that very species of suffering that unfeeling man devises for his fellow, often recoils with all its insupportable misery on his own malignant heart. How horrified and aghast looked the despotic squire! How did he tremble under the agonizing pangs of dreadful, of irreparable disappointment, when he beheld his own son carried home by weeping menials, and stretched before

him a bleeding corpse! It appears that these light-hearted sportsmen, whilst in the concealment of the forest, had resorted to their favourite frolic of exchanging garments, in order to play off an innocent hoax on Amelia, whom they expected to meet at the extremities of the policies; and to this simple incident alone is attributed the wonderful preservation of Josiah, and the melancholy fate of his bosom friend. This deplorable occurrence supplied a theme of extensive speculation, of profound wonder, and uncertain conjecture throughout the entire district; and wherever two appeared in confab, the rueful length of their visage afforded a sufficient index to a heart stunned with horrid amazement, and a correct tale-bearer of their secret whispers. But the next heart-rending interview of the impassioned lovers, bereaved of friend and brother, is far beyond the power of description; no language is sufficiently expressive—no figure of speech, however highly wrought in strains of unrivalled eloquence—no soaring apostrophe, however excursive its range and rich its resources, is competent to represent the scene in its native colours. All the softer feelings that possess the rational soul were here excited to the last pitch of endurance; while in silent sorrow they hung on each other's bosom, insensible to every external object, they breathed their kindred woe, in sigh responsive sigh; whilst their gushing tears, like meeting streamlets of adjacent mountains, mingled as they flowed. Here was exhibited a picture of human happiness marred by man's inhumanity to man—a scene of weeping misery in the lovely creation of heaven, blighted by revolt, from which angels shrink and demons glory to contemplate—a prospect, whose melting influence would have solved the heart of stubborn adamant into the balm of generous sympathy.

Such is the petrifying effect of crime on the human mind, that one act of delinquency only prepares it for

the perpetration of another, and another involving greater degrees of atrocity ; and one desperate stratagem having failed to accomplish its villanous purpose, the malignant ingenuity becomes more acute and more fertile in satanic device. The father of Amelia, bereaved of his only son by the misguided act of his own hand, his bosom now becomes a tumultuous scene of conflicting passions, over which reason declines to wield her sceptre. All is a wild, uproarious combination of sorrow, disappointment, malice, and revenge ; whilst the fatal success of his misguided aim imparts additional poignancy to his gnawing frustration of purpose. Amid this furious convulsion of infernal elements, and lowering under a tempest of maddened resolve, to the cold-blooded crime already committed he designs to add perjury and murder, as the only means of quieting his virulent passions and avenging himself on the peculiar deception by which he was betrayed into the hapless mistake.

The untimely fate of the youth being still surrounded with a deep shade of mystery and a haze of bewildering conjecture, intelligence was secretly conveyed to the laird of Thirdpart, that in consequence of special information, a warrant was issued for the apprehension of his son, founded on a charge of murder. Josiah, conscious of his own innocence, and bending beneath the soul-subduing influence of love and grief, was resolved to brave it out, and vindicate himself of the false accusation. But his father, having more knowledge of the nefarious scheme, the well-concerted machinery that was in full operation, and the gold-foiled images of personified depravity, that, setting heaven and hell at defiance, would swear the sun out of existence, if such were necessary to ensure a conviction, at once resolved on a less hazardous expedient. Josiah, without enjoying the painful pleasure of bidding farewell to his beloved Amelia, was accordingly des-

patched under the cloudy canopy of midnight, and shipped on board a vessel bound for the Netherlands, where he had a cousin holding a high and influential situation in one of those provinces. Delay is generally acknowledged to be dangerous, but in the present instance it would have been attended with fatal consequences; for, ere the next blaze of the meridian sun, the judicial heralds of vengeance were scouring the district in pursuit of the alleged murderer. But propelled by a friendly zephyr, the innocent object of search had escaped beyond the power of their warrant, and no tongue, however treacherous, could tell whither.

Though youthful love's untainted flame
Oft kythes itself in blushing shame,
 'Tis hard to be repress;
It brooks, unchanged, the tyrant's wrath,
And conquers many a thorny path,
 Before 'tis fully blest.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN contemplating the vast, the stupendous theatre of the universe, with all its gorgeous machinery revolving in perfect harmony amid the boundless waste of infinitude, the conclusion is inevitable, that there is an invisible, an incomprehensible existence governing all its motions and swaying the destinies of man—man, unhappy man, ever fertile in scheming misery for his fellows, ever active in working his own infelicity. Behold the unenviable condition of the two unfortunate squires, controlled by the most unamiable feelings of humanity, both bereft of their only sons, who might have proved their shields of defence in the time of aggressive hostility, and their

solace in the glimmering twilight of declining life ! The one is prematurely hurled into the gulf of darkness and perpetual oblivion by the murderous deed of his father ; and the other is compelled to abandon his home and his country as a hunted fugitive, and seek an asylum in a foreign land, where, remote from the object of his love, he is doomed to mingle his sighs in the whispering breeze and his tears with the drops of heaven. And all this misery is the unnatural effect of that soothing emotion of the soul that sweetens the existence of man through all the harassing turmoils of life. What an overwhelming ocean of disquietude, privation, and suffering is sometimes the hapless result of an innocent cause ! nay, even from that undefined something which was never designed to strew with thorns the rugged pilgrimage of man.

Amelia, still unconscious as the tenant of the tomb or the child unborn as to the severity of fate respecting the object of her warmest affections, resorts as usual to the sequestered retreat, buoyed on the wings of hope that there she will find a balm for her sorrows in the soothing accents of her loving Josiah. But the bower is desolate, unblest by his presence, uncheered with his smiles, unperfumed with the breathings of his love. Here she muses in silent solitude with the ears of a vigilant sentinel, eagerly listening for the tread of his foot, and cherishing a legion of baseless conjectures in excuse for his absence ; but no sound saluted her watchful organs, save the sonorous voice of the ox lowing in the distance, the plaintive bleating of the shepherd's charge faintly shivering the dusky thicket, and the more exalted creation chirping and fluttering in the regions above. Wrapt in this solemn shade of pensive stillness, as remote from rational society as if cast on a desolate island in the midst of the ocean, she wastes the lingering moments in

teasing suspense, whilst her bosom heaves with the stifled swellings of sorrow, unalleviated by the cordial of sympathy; till, chafed in heart by the galling influence of deferred hope and blighted expectation, she quits the bower hallowed by past endearments—she winds her way and wanders back to the mansion of unpleasant reflections, absorbed in the gloom of disappointment, and ravelled in a maze of perplexing thought. The first sounds that greeted her ear, as she glided softly along the smooth pavement of the lobby to her private apartment, resembled in effect a shower of poniards thrust into her heart, “Where can the villain be? There is witchcraft in this movement; but I’ll pursue him to the very gates of hell, cost what it may.” The gloomy condition of her mind at once interpreted the impassioned language of her father, and impressed the alarming conviction that Josiah was the hapless object of pursuit. Transient was the space afforded her to brood over this melancholy conclusion, ere her father abruptly plunged into her chamber with his eyes flashing indignation, and demanded of her, on pain of immediate expulsion and abandonment to beggary, that she should show where the fellow was secreted. Overwhelmed with a gust of sudden amazement, she solemnly protested that she was ignorant of the whole matter, and could supply no information respecting the youth, even though the same hand that shed the blood of her brother should——. At these piercing words he gave a convulsive shudder, and fled precipitately from her presence. By this furious explosion of vindictive wrath Amelia clearly perceived that the imminent peril of her lover was no longer suspended on the mere fleeting vapours of conjecture—no longer poised on the uncertain surmise of a timid fancy, but fixed on the solid basis of a dread reality. And stung to the core of the soul by the bitter reflection, that

whether fate's stern decree had doomed him to exile or death, it was all for her sake, in a paroxysm of insuperable anguish she threw herself prostrate on the couch of repose, and poured out her sorrows in a flood of tears. Destined to endure a pressure of misery so severe, she envied the condition of her brother, reposing "where tyrants vex not," and would that her father might exceed the bounds of his threat and banish her beyond the pale of existence. Having surpassed the dreary hour of midnight in sleepless discomfort, tossed on the swelling billows of disquietude, she at last sighed herself into the folds of Morpheus's mantle, and was involved in the frightful scenery of a horrid vision. Transported by the wild imagination to some uncultured locality, she beheld herself closely environed by an immense thicket of impervious briars, where no vista appeared through which even a cony might have found egress. The enchanted earth, which was strewn with flowers, trembled under, it clave asunder in the midst, and a hollow murmur, awfully striking, ascended from the regions beneath. Chilled with horror, she looked around in vain for the possibility of escape, when, like a dread volcanic eruption, the yawning crater on which she gazed poured forth a legion of fiends, yelling, grinning, staring, and gnashing their teeth with every species of horrid grimace. Thus beset with objects of appalling terror, the blood ceased to flow in her veins, while the stifling harbinger of dissolution seemed ready to shut the life-flowing channel of respiration. Just at this fearful crisis, one of the hideous demons dragged her to the brink of the yawning gulf, whence he emerged, where she heard the voice of her father uttering the same accents that erewhile greeted her ears as she passed through the lobby; and, whilst dropping from the grasp of the gruesome wretch into the dell of

darkness, confusion, and wild disorder, she was caught in the wings of a whirlwind, and transferred to the summit of a beautiful eminence, mantled with a profusion of primroses. Thence she looked, and behold the entire thorny thicket was enveloped in one flame of devouring fire, which ascended into the void heavens with awful grandeur and glorious magnificence. Erelong the wide wilderness was converted into a shining lake of pellucid water, with a stately bark arrayed in flowing canvas gliding gently on its placid bosom. On the deck she distinctly observed the identical Josiah, her very lover and friend, wiping his glistening eyes, and looking wistfully towards the flowery hillock on which she was elevated. She waved her kerchief and extended her voice to attract his attention, but on a sudden the whole fairy scene was obscured by an intervening cloud that spread a sombre gloom over all her visual horizon ; and breaking through her distorted slumbers, she found her head on the same pillow where she laid it, aching with grief and steeped in tears. The meridian sun, beaming and burning in the glorious altitudes of heaven, again beheld the lovely Amelia in her solitary wanderings, eagerly seeking, but seeking in vain, for the object of her affections. Believing that he was banished the home of his father, and hunted like a deer on the mountains by a ravenous kennel gaping for their prey, the indulgent fancy whispered the heart-stirring idea of his being secreted in some deep shaded retreat of the forest unfrequented by man ; and thus influenced, with unwearyed step and undaunted breast, she traversed the pathless wild, and amid a thousand difficulties, resolved to share his rugged fate, be life or death decreed. Oft would she start, and pause, and listen, and listen, with a sort of thrilling suspense, hearing a fancied whisper sighing through the thicket, "Come, my dearest Amelia ;" but

all was a creature of the ardent imagination. No kindred spirit was there ; no voice of sympathy was heard save the cooing accents of the plaintive cushat. These doleful strains were most consonant to her feelings, and found a ready response in the lovely bosom of the fair, bereft of all that was lovely, all that adorned the world and rendered life worth enjoying. All to her was cheerless and desolate as a region unpeopled ; without the solace of a friend to whom, with confiding trust, she could unbosom her misfortune, she inmured her sorrows in her own isolated self, and shunned the gaze of mortal vision. It happened, however, on one delightful evening, as Amelia, with downcast eyes and heavy heart, was wandering in single solitude amongst the rude luxuriance of uncultured nature, her attention was suddenly arrested by the mumbling sound of a human voice, as if engaged in some secret soliloquy. Seized with instant consternation, she raised her humid eyes, which in deep dejection buried all their lovely glances in the underwood, when she descried, with overwhelming amazement, the sombre aspect of Peggie Trotter, the spaewife, muttering her passing cogitations as she mused along. This prophetic being was, according to common fame, peculiarly connected with the mystical number seven, being a seventh daughter, lineally descended from seventh daughters through the lapse of seven generations. On her breast she exhibited a brilliant star imprinted by the hand of nature, and appeared coeval with her birth. This mysterious badge was, and ever has been, acknowledged as a sure indication, an infallible pledge of her being possessed of the second sight, or, in other words, endued with the power of penetrating to a certain extent into the dark repository of future events. With eyes full of expression, they surveyed each other in mutual silence, till Peggie, endowed with peculiar suavity of

manners, invaded the solemn stillness—"Wae's me, bonnie lassie, I ween fu' weel the dool an' wonder that ye fain wad hound, an' be the whilk ye're a' forgotten. But dight thae tears frae yer bonnie black een, an' dinna greet out yer day-lights a' thegither ere ye see the tither side o' the dowie picture. Muckle an' sair, atweel, hae ye dreed the pine o' yer thrawart lot, an' ye hae meikle mair to dree yet, ere ye find the tint heart for whilk ye are seeken' wi' sie eydent care. Dinna think it's my wish to eek yer waes, or set thorns i' yer gentle bosom, as ony ill-gashioned fiend wad do for his ain sport, for my very heart nips whan I think on the fell fate that's afore ye. But folk's nane the waur o' seein' the cloud ere the storm bursts, that they may seek beild whar they best can; or hearin' the growl o' the puttin' stot ere his shadow appears, that they may be warned o' skaith an' prepared for the warst; an' tho' ye canna flee frae the ills o' yer lot, as ye might frae the storm or the putter, yet whan ye see them comin', an' ken ye canna evite them, ye may mak sib wi' them without bein' owerwhummelt wi' surprise. Now dinna tyne houp, an' greet yersel dead, but set a stout heart to a stay brae, for tho' ye hae a lang dark night to wander in, a thorny gait, be sure that ere the dowed blades fa' seven times frae the timmer, the warst o' yer days will be gane, an' yer heart will be as grit wi' joy as e'er it was wi' grief. Yer tears, sighs, an' troubles will be a' drowned an' swallowed up i' the very fountain that gae them birth. But I maun gae hame ere the sun get out o' sight; for I hae my ain burden to bear, as weel as ye." Although Peggie's predictions appeared quite mysterious and inexplicable in the estimation of the love-lorn damsel to whom they were pathetically addressed, such was the effect produced, that the faint semblance of a smile discovered itself curiously blended with grief's distorted features; but

whether it was a smile of trust in the marvellous divination, or the precursing shadow of inspired comfort, even the seventh daughter with all her mystical endowments was unable to determine. This chance interview, however, diverted the gloomy desponding thoughts of Amelia, and unfolded to her mind a diversified prospect, an extensive field of bewildering contemplation. When reflecting solely on the predicted severity of endurance, which invidious fate was still preparing for her behind the veil of futurity, in addition to the load she already sustained, the grisly demon of despair, with all its repulsive retinue of horrors, would stare through her eyelids; and, but for the gilded pledge of coming enjoyment, that shone behind the scenes in glorious perspective, and based on the same probability as the other, the overwhelming pressure had crushed her visible existence into the dark depths of everlasting oblivion. And thus whilst mourning under the irksome sceptre of grief and suspense, hope ingeniously managed the counterpoise by throwing into the sinking mind a glimpse of Peggie's refreshing sequel. So the ill-starred Amelia sustained with amazing fortitude a life deeply chequered with the storms of outrageous fortune.

Meanwhile, her father not only experienced the gnawings of pungent sorrow arising out of his peculiar bereavement, and the bitter pangs of remorse, on account of the manner in which it was produced, but the burning passion of ungratified revenge on the self-exiled Josiah for having balked his murderous aim; and his entire soul being usurped by a rebel host of venomous reptiles, dreadful were the visions that haunted his pillow when reason yielded the reins and sceptre to the reckless sway of the errant fancy. So harassing to his mind became those horrid apparitions, that his days, as well as his nights, were spent in terror, misery, and wretchedness;

and as a deceptive solace, he habitually resorted to the deadening influence of intoxicating stimulants, which only aggravated the horror of his condition. It happened on the first night of November, a season long associated with appalling sights and sounds, spells, enchantments and infernal incantations, more than sufficient to shake the stability of the most intrepid soul—on this mystical eve, as he reclined in his huge oaken easy-chair, and all in a listless attitude of pensive stupor, the tempest howled in the leafless forest, and raged with astounding fury around the ancient biggin of his ancestors; the massive doors creaked on their hinges, the windows rattled in their time-worn sockets, and the screech owl screamed in the attics. The incessant vibrations of the edifice, produced by the power of the storm, having sprung the latch that secured the door of his parlour, he lifted his half-sealed eyelids, and behold! the ghost of his slaughtered son appeared in ghastly prospect before him. Softly and silently the grisly figure flitted across the haunted apartment, clothed in the borrowed vesture, the very deceptive guise by which the murderous missile was conducted to the unsuspecting heart. The conscience-stricken squire looked unutterable terror, while the terrific spectre, exhibiting the pale aspect of death, bestudded with eyes of piercing expression, stared him wildly in the face. How dreadful was the quaking horror inspired by the repulsive prospect, when he beheld the mortal wound inflicted by his guilty hand, and the blood streaming from the breast of his own offspring! He endeavoured to escape from a sight so dismal and appalling, but all his efforts resulted in failure; every joint was loose in its socket, every muscle paralysed, every nerve quivering in dread dismay, and his entire physical system reduced to the helplessness of infancy. A flattering voice at length issued from the pallid lips of the apparition, or fancy whispered the

accents, "Father, behold thy murdered son! Thou art the unhappy man! Thy soul is stained with his blood. Cease to persecute the innocent." Unable any longer to sustain this tempest of terror, and the furious commotion of his internal faculties, he gave vent to an involuntary shriek of awful import, that resounded with alarming echo through every chamber, cavern, and gallery of the antiquated mansion. The whole inmates, under the resistless impulse of fear, rushed from their several apartments as if all had been enveloped in flames. Curious was the scene of wild confusion that instantly ensued, for, ignorant of the matter, some ran one way and some another, all with eager eyes staring through the haze of consternation, till, entering the apartment where their lord was secreted, they found him in a state of dormant insensibility, all trembling and suffused with a cold perspiration. From that appalling period of soul-chilling horror, he appeared a timid child that had sucked from its nurse the harassing belief that bogles and brownies haunted every region of the world; and during the dregs of his earthly career, he never after would submit to retirement, and was frequently observed, with shuddering terror, to exclaim, even in the midst of conversation, "D'y'e see that!" This mental agony soon began to commit awful ravages on his constitution, and the evident tokens of premature demise began to manifest themselves in a manner not to be mistaken. At his earnest request the officiating priest of that district was brought into his presence, to whom he confessed the murder of his own son, and the whole circumstances connected therewith, acquitting, at the same time, every other person of any partnership in the guilt thereof; and after lingering for a transient space on the giddy precipice of time, the dreary confines of eternal oblivion, he slipped through the dark postern into the fathomless dominion of *Hades*.

Amelia, the only surviving member of the family, was now left desolate in this barbarous age of a rude inhospitable world; and having just passed her twentieth year, she was, by the special mandate of her father, subjected to the absolute control of a brazen-hearted uncle, governed solely by a principle of indomitable selfishness. Actuated by a brilliant beam of hope that a mutual intimacy might be formed betwixt her and her cousin, who was a youth possessed of considerable suavity of manners, and by no means destitute of personal attractions, he transferred the bereaved damsel from the desolate mansion to the bosom of his own family, under the specious pretext of pity on account of her lonely situation, and assuaging her grief through the medium of social intercourse. But after six months experience of Amelia's dispositions, he was privileged with the discovery that the tower of his sanguine hope was a mere vapour in the brain, a bubble on the stream, an illusive phantom based on the fleeting quicksands of fancy. All the feigned kindness, the ingenious sophistry so unsparingly lavished on the orphan, proved utterly ineffectual in producing the desired consummation. Though the glorious fulfilment of the soothsayer's prediction, in regard to her subsequent fortune, still slumbered in the dormant chrysalis, she still looked forward to the seventh shedding of the foliage, when, like the butterfly fully matured, it should develop itself in all its magnificence. Her prudential guardian, having clearly perceived the frustration of his laudable design, began to think seriously within himself, that in the event of—yes, he was heir-at-law to the estate, and why then look on this as a disappointment? All the barrier that stood betwixt him and the inheritance was only that jumming, weak-minded lassie, as he supposed, who might be quietly disposed of without incurring any serious loss to society.

But Uncle Charlie conceived a most erroneous opinion as to the mental qualities of his niece ; though exhibiting the delicate frame of a female, that slender casement enclosed a mind of masculine fortitude and heroic courage. With all the feigned blandishment and affected sympathy that the subtle ingenuity of a devil could possibly devise, he one day took occasion to dilate, with much apparent concern, on the delicate state of her health, adding, at the same time, that he had secured for her a temporary residence on the Island of May, with the Lady Abbess of the convent, that she might enjoy the recruiting influence of the sea air and change of scenery. Though somewhat astonished by the proposition, as she was not sensible of any unhealthy symptoms in her constitution, she cordially acceded to the proposition, having little enjoyment in her present situation, and was forthwith transported thither.

Now the mischievous plots of the most malignant being in the universe, whether man or devil, would be circumscribed within a narrow compass did their execution depend solely on his own personal exertions. Even the arch-fiend himself, possessing neither the attributes of omniscience nor omnipresence, might be comparatively harmless were it not for the host of emissaries which he always commands, winged with loyalty, and ready to speed on the accomplishment of every unhallowed volition. The abbess referred to by her uncle was neither more nor less than a hired miscreant of his own sex, habited in female attire, who was appointed to accompany the unsuspecting stranger in all her excursive rambles over the island. He was to conduct her to some precipitous verge, under pretence of observing the sea-fowl nestling in the cliffs, and opportunely cause her to stumble, just as it were by accident, over the precipice into the flood beneath. This nefarious commission was not to be

executed speedily, lest it should engender suspicion and incite unpleasant inquiry. Amelia, however, being wholly unaccustomed to the giddy footing of those lofty promontories, in every critical position clung so closely and so tenaciously to her veiled companion, that the carrying out of the design appeared utterly impracticable, as in the event of stumbling, whether by accident or otherwise, both must have shared the same untimely fate. But the crisis of Amelia's majority was rapidly approaching, beyond which the catastrophe could by no means be postponed; and the feigned abbess, having spent a sleepless night in devising schemes, and planning projects for the next, the fatal day, when he was to earn the palm of glory or the badge of ignominy, came forth in his treacherous guise to salute his unconscious victim. Having engaged in familiar converse, they walked on together like two most affectionate friends towards the brink of the precipice designed as the final termination of Amelia's earthly pilgrimage. He directed her attention to some aquatic object for the express purpose of taking her off her guard, that he might without one struggling effort effect the horrid plunge; but instead of turning her eyes in the direction pointed out, she looked through the veil of her guide, and with a bland smile, said she would like to be one of these birds, they look so innocent, so loving and happy. Just at this critical moment, when the mercenary wretch should have executed his fiendish commission, he recoiled with horror from the precipice, dragging the damsel along with him, and all shuddering under some violent nervous affection, sunk down on the grass. Whether this was produced by the natural emotions of love, kindled by the smile of beauty, to which the heart of youth is ever susceptible, or whether it was the stirring of a divine impulse in his soul, could never be ascertained, as the disparity

of rank precluded every expression of his feelings, except "Ah, me ! I'm undone, for I cannot." Amelia, deeply concerned on account of this peculiar occurrence, sat down beside her companion, who on recovering a certain degree of composure, declared that he would now discover the sole purpose of her exilement to that island, provided she would pledge herself to inviolable secrecy, for, did the matter transpire, his life would most assuredly go for hers. Having received the solemn pledge, he threw off the veil of deception, and spoke with the open face, not of an abbeſs, but a young man of rather prepossessing appearance. He told her the whole was a concerted scheme to deprive her of life ; that he had undertaken to execute the infernal device, and assumed the disguise for that purpose. He told her not to be alarmed by his faithful confession, or in any wise apprehensive of danger ; for though her life had been in his hand for some months, and every time he walked out with her it was for no other purpose than to deprive her of existence, she was now as safe with him as if she were in the arms of her mother ; but she must be concealed for his sake until a favourable opportunity should offer for her release, as he behoved to announce at head-quarters that her murder was accomplished. He therefore conducted her to an unfrequented cave at the South Ness, and secreted her in that subterraneous solitude, telling her not to be startled or terrified, for he would visit her residence after nightfall, in his real costume, and bring such things as her comfortless situation most required, declaring that though he was but an humble vassal, bowing beneath the tyrant's rod, he would visit her when he should sleep, and minister to her comfort, according to his ability, even at the peril of his own life.

Now when all the islanders were shut up in their nocturnal retirement, the stars of the firmament looked

down with twinkling joy on the benighted wight wending his way across the isolated world, not with the malignant heart of a demon, prosecuting a murderous purpose, but as a ministering angel, glowing with heavenly benevolence. The scanty provision provided for his own sustentation, the rustic clothing in which he recruited exhausted nature with the balm of repose, all that a renewed heart, anxious to alleviate the sufferings of persecuted humanity, could possibly command, is borne on his shoulders to the dreary cavern to sustain and comfort the very being whom, but a few hours before, he sought to banish beyond the precincts of time and expunge from the records of life. On arriving at the entrance of the cave, he spoke softly before exposing his concealed light, lest the chill of terror should annoy her bosom; and the young lady, sitting immured in the darkness of death, instantly recognising his feminine voice, responded with a degree of ease and confidence which, under the extraordinary circumstances, he had no reason to expect. 'Twas then by the aid of his glimmering rush-light that she first perceived the rugged domicile which, by stern decree, she had in exchange for a palace. She looked on him with a smile of confiding affability which pierced him to the soul; and he wept bitterly on the horrid recollection that the amiable being whose lovely eyes beamed with life would ere now have been dashed on the craggy cliffs, or drowned in the foaming flood, had not his villanous arm been arrested in its murderous career. She endeavoured by every endearing sentiment to assuage the anguish of his wounded spirit, and stay the streaming torrent of his relenting grief; while, under the influence of inexpressible emotion, he spread for her—yes, for the high-born heiress—the humble couch of rest, and smoothed the pillow for the head of persecuted innocence. Having done all that was in his

power to mitigate the miseries of her dreary situation, it was with painful reluctance that he withdrew from her presence, and left her to spend the night in her lonely solitude, silent as the shadow of death. Here leave the ill-starred lady in the desolate land of her captivity under the fostering care of—what? a being specially commissioned to effect her destruction, and glance for a little on the doings in the land of her birth—fields, wilds, and woodlands of her legitimate inheritance.

Intelligence having reached the ear of Uncle Charlie that his niece had stumbled over a cliff on the margin of the island, and finally disappeared amongst the tumbling billows of the ocean, he shed a few crocodile tears which, for connection's sake, he always had on command. And deepening the weeds of his mourning, to gull the dim sight of mortals, while his hollow heart, concealed in the sable vesture, bounded with avaricious delight, he now strutted forth as sole heir to his brother's possessions.

In this ever-changing theatre of instability, great and many are the revolutions that a few months sometimes effect in a small district. By a sudden stroke of fate the laird of Thirdpart was prematurely transferred from the bustling stage of time and all its varying scenery, to the land of unchanging stillness, silence, and gloomy repose. And his only son Josiah, having some years ago vanished beyond the ken of the district, and his name all but sunk in the dark gulf of forgetfulness, forth comes a distant relative, riding sublime on the towering billows of hope, and furnished with credentials to prove his title to the inheritance.

Who in such circumstances, such fortuitous emergencies, could suppress the swelling emotions of internal transport? Here without peril, labour, or anxiety, he succeeds to splendour and luxurious ease, just as the lilies of the field to their glory and magnificence. Such wind-

falls sometimes occur in this world of uncertain turmoil, imparting consequence to insignificant mortals, but they are rare, like the visits of angels, and sometimes come by the wind and vanish by the water. But to return to the island.

The fair and delicate Amelia has now been eight days and nights entombed amid the chilling damps of the subterranean cave, duly, dutifully, and assiduously attended by the transformed abbess, who devoted his hours of liberty to privation and imprisonment with the hapless victim of insatiable avarice. Upon the same memorable first night of November, precisely two years subsequent to that on which her father was favoured with a diet of visitation from the *manes* of his murdered son, Amelia, in her doleful habitation, first experienced the sickening twinges of terror; while she sat absorbed in pensive musings on the past, the elements of nature, roused from a lengthened period of slumber, severed the bond of peace, and burst forth in fierce, terrific conflict. The raving tempest groaned and howled in the mouth of the vault, producing gloomy and horrid echoes in the dark interior. The sea, lifting up her stupendous billows, foamed and dashed, and roared with a voice of thunder amongst the rugged cliffs that opposed its fury. The vivid lightning flashing from the canopy of pitchy darkness, and quivering with luminous blaze through the raging atmosphere, only served to heighten the surrounding gloom. And the open windows of heaven poured down the exhaled moisture in gushing torrents, wafted on the impetuous blast. No sound was heard in the kingdom of animate nature, save the wild scream of the sea-fowl competing with the hoarse noise of the elemental war. To all these horrors was superadded the dread recollection that, on the previous night, she had dreamed that a giant of appalling stature arose from the abyss of

the ocean, exhibiting an eye of fire blazing in his forehead, and speaking with a voice that shook the island to its centre; that this tremendous image entered the frowning confines of the cavern, invaded her solitary retirement, and advancing towards the couch of her repose, clasped her in the cold grasp of death. All these reflections within, the dread convulsions of nature without, and entertaining no hope of her accustomed visitor, by reason of the intemperate elements, rendered this the most distressful period of her eventful history. But in the very depth of this cloud of congregated miseries, the well-known accents of her peculiar friend, as he entered the cave, "It's me," again saluted her ears. This was an angel's visit whose cheering influence dispelled a cloud of insupportable gloom. She rose to meet him, still evincing the quaking effects of terror, and in a sort of frantic ecstasy, seized him by the hand and sat him down beside her. This unwonted familiarity, and the paleness of fear still mantling her visage, agonized his heart and convinced him that some uncomfortable feeling was exercising authority over her natural demeanour. Knowing his own character, and erroneously supposing that her disquietude arose from a want of confidence in his professions of friendship, he again, in a flood of tears, protested that, though engaged and hired as her destroyer, he was willing, nay, ready, to give his life for hers. She consoled him by an involuntary burst of feeling, that never was a human face, save one, more acceptable to her than was his own that night; and he had nothing to fear, were she but released from that bondage. Emboldened by such sentiments from one whom he knew to be a lady of fortune, and observing her apparent agitation of mind, he determined not to abandon her to the miseries of that frightful solitude, but, reckless of all consequences, to watch over her during that dread-inspir-

ing night. In answer to a question, he was just proceeding to narrate the blood-chilling particulars of a fatal shipwreck that occurred in that part of the island, during a similar tempest nearly twelve months before, when he was suddenly interrupted by an appalling shriek as if uttered by a combination of human voices. Leaving the glimmering rush for the comfort of Amelia, he threaded his dubious way to the vestibule of the cave, from whence he descried a huge dingy object looming in the dark distance, and wallowing on the turbulent bosom of the boiling foam. He stared with gaping wonder, through the black fury of the tempest, until the dark mountain, with a fearful crash, vanished in the smothering surf, like a flitting meteor in the ocean of infinitude. And neither sight nor sound being perceptible within the range of his mystified organs, saving the furious raging of the storm, he returned to the lady under the full impression that his senses had been gulled by an illusion of fancy. Scarce had he resumed his narrative, when his attention was again arrested by a scrambling noise at the entrance of the cavern. Under the influence of considerable excitement, which he endeavoured to conceal, he again sallied forth on a reconnoitring expedition, when his watchful ears were astounded by the voice of a human being exclaiming, in stifled accents, "Mercy, mercy on a dying mortal!" This was a single survivor from among the company of an ill-fated vessel that had foundered in the distance. When the fatal catastrophe occurred, he had the presence of mind to clasp a small empty cask in his arms, and by the buoyance of which he was borne on a billow of Providence till he found himself thrown prostrate on the rugged shore; and being ignorant in what region of the world he was cast, he was seized by the painful apprehension that though he had escaped the ruthless fury of the elements, he might fall a victim to

the plundering propensity of more relentless man. Here was the guardian of Amelia now wrapt in a most perplexing dilemma. He could not abandon the shipwrecked stranger to his fate, and however willing to wade through the tempest and awaken the islanders to his assistance, he could not leave the lonely female destitute of his presence amid the horrors of the scene; and, further, the adoption of such an alternative was eminently calculated to develop the whole plot. He hastens to apprise his lovely charge of the disastrous event, whose high-toned sympathies in behalf of the sufferer at once absorbed the miseries of her own situation, and diverted the deep-flowing current of self-concern into a wide channel of pure disinterested humanity. She resigned her borrowed couch, and all its humble comforts, to the hapless being whose life, like her own, had been miraculously preserved. Becoming modesty forbade her interference with the shipwrecked wanderer, who appeared all pale, shivering, and exhausted, while his eyes rolled in wild distraction, and his dripping hair hung loosely over his dejected visage; but a few hours of calm repose having recruited his physical exhaustion, restored suspended consciousness, and rectified his disordered features, she gazed with expressive looks of increasing earnestness, aided by the faint glimmerings of an expiring taper, on the visage of the stranger, whilst the stirrings of her body betrayed the emotions of her soul. Overcome at length by an ungovernable impulse of feeling, she exclaimed, "Gracious Heaven! What do mine eyes behold! What! a baseless vision, a mere creation of fancy! or, in very deed, the long-lost Josiah, friend of my early youth, the companion of my thoughtless childhood." Her guardian, in dumb astonishment, looked aghast, supposing that her sufferings had induced a fit of mental aberration. And the stranger, raising his head from the pillow of repose, said—

“Who speaks? Where, in what enchanted land has fate disposed of me? Who utters that name? I once was Josiah in the shadowy forests of Thirdpart; but where am I now? and what?” What a moment of thrilling agitation, as if body and soul were jumbled into one chaos of wild disorder! She sprang with frantic rapture to the couch where he reclined, and catching him by the hand with more than modest grasp, fell silent in a gust of overwhelming amazement. Their mutual recognition presented a scene of extravagant feeling, of ardent affection and vehement caress, which the callous heart of cold, calculating humanity could never conceive. Never were entranced mortals more involved in a whirlwind of surprise, more bewildered in a halo of dazzling delight; whilst their spell-bound attendant, fixed in the trammels of perplexity, gazed with rivetted silence, like a petrified statue. The whole subterranean group of mysterious mortals, amazed at themselves and each other, wondered themselves beyond the power of wonder; and the rugged course to the goal of hymeneal bliss, which these faithful lovers were destined to traverse, imparted a poignant zest to their subsequent feast of enjoyment.

The excited elements having exhausted their fury on the world wrapt in darkness, the morning twilight was ushered in with inviting tranquillity; and Amelia's watchful attendant, perceiving through the haze that erewhile obscured his mental discernment, that the marvellous events with which he was so intimately connected were speedily to develop themselves in a blaze of dazzling astonishment, became inspired with unshrinking courage and noble independence. He, with bounding heart and elastic tread, speeds to his humble cot with the fleet agility of a mountain deer, for the express purpose of habiting the shipwrecked stranger in his own holiday vestments, being dishabilled by the fatal disaster;

who, on his appearance amongst the islanders, was as foreign to their remembrance as if he had recently dropped from the feet of Jupiter. Here comes a yacht gliding gallantly on the bosom of the flood, with a splendid ensign floating in the breeze; in this was the assumed laird of Thirdpart, on his first visit to take cognizance of his isolated territory. While he was traversing the island with majestic stride, and heart inflated with the windfall of fortune, he approached too near the margin, when he was kindly warned of his danger by the fact of a young lady, just nine days ago, having stumbled and vanished for ever in the streaming flood. Josiah heard all, observed all, and considered all in silence. At length, says he, "shall I call the lady out of the flood?" They laughed him to scorn, and said one to another, "Whar's that skeir man come frae?" Then Josiah, with odd gesticulation, called her name three times over, and the drowned lady was immediately discovered emerging from the shady concealment of a projecting cliff. Some faces assumed the paleness of death itself, bewraying the heart-felt conviction that it was her ghost which, by some incantation, he had roused before the time, *i.e.*, before twa an' forty days had elapsed, and others, with a wide-mouthed Ha, ha, ha! construed the whole affair into a concerted guising sport for the amusement of the new laird. But perceiving, as she advanced, that it was the identical being in dress and features, gait and person, all became influenced by a dumbfoundering impulse of feeling, and stared at each other with foreboding eyes and expressive silence. The lady was now submitted to the scrutiny of the monk, who declared that it was a most striking apparition, that the conjurer was evidently in league with the infernal powers, and that he must be transmitted to the proper quarter to be confessed in the usual manner. Josiah

merely replied that were he conveyed to the coast, he would by no means disguise his power, but would there afford additional evidence of his power by reclaiming another being from the obscurity of the tomb. The assumed proprietor, dreading skaith, lest, by the resurrection of his predecessor, he should be expelled from the lairdship, proposed that the conjurer should rather be put in confinement there ; but the boatmen refused to put to sea unless the request of the grue carlin were granted, rightly supposing that if he could bring one being up alive, after lodging nine days in the dark depths of the ocean, he could as easily send a whole boat's crew to the bottom with one frown of his displeasure. Therefore, he and the mysterious apparition were reluctantly received on board, under charge of the very man who witnessed the falling of the lady over the precipice, that ostensible evidence might be adduced. The distance, which does not exceed four miles, was rapidly disposed of under the propelling influence of a favourable breeze ; and Josiah, with the fruit of his incantation, was delivered over to the authorities of Crail, charged with the crime of divination, and of being lineally descended from the Witch of Endor. By permission, he proceeded, with his retinue (under an escort of infantry from the castle), to the tenantry of Thirdpart, where he was pledged to exhibit another manifestation of his infernal power. His peculiar enchantment, however, was first visibly exercised on the subjects of animate nature. No sooner had he gained a footing on the lands of his nativity, than he was instantly recognized by the vassals, who were watching the progress of the uncouth procession ; and by one flourish of his bonnet, all apparently controlled by a potent spell, abandoned their implements of toil, and with unclad skulls, rallied around him, dancing, bounding, shouting, waving their bonnets, and

evinced the most extravagant ebullitions of transport. The entire district, catching infection, rushed to the scene of commotion, shouting through the sheer force of example; while the vassals from Amelia's domains, astounded by the hue and cry, brought up the rear of the wondering concourse. During this discordant medley of human voices, hens cackling, cocks crowing, ewes bleating, cattle lowing, and the wild boars in the distant forest squeaking in concert, the military commander stood staring through a haze of inexpressible amazement, and the assumed laird by his side, looking all the colours of the iris. The scarlet-clad dragoon being absolutely lost in the outre affair, stepped into the centre of the tumultuous crowd where stood Josiah with Amelia in his arm, and tapping him on the shoulder, requested an explanation, as the whole affair seemed wrapt in mystery. He therefore acquainted him that the lady, by some manœuvre, had been reputed dead for nine days, though still existing in the valley of vision, and himself had been reckoned, for five years, amongst the legions that crowd the oblivious world, though still in the land of vicissitude—that both were in his presence, and he could satisfy himself that they were tangible beings, and not mere illusions of satanic agency; and, further, that he was heir to these lands, as the only son of his deceased father, and he appealed to these demonstrations of joy for the truth of his statement, and to his protection in the vindication of his right. The heir-presumptive perceiving that the game was up, and that one effort of resistance would place his personal safety in a very precarious condition, at once resigned all claim, and publicly recognised Josiah, the reputed wizard, as the legal proprietor of all. The matter being thus amicably settled, they entered the mansion accompanied with the military retinue, and regaled themselves in harmony, after which the balked

laird took his departure, whistling on his thumb for want of a better instrument ; and Amelia's faithful and loving band of vassals conducted her in triumph to her own domicile, and freed Uncle Charlie of his irksome responsibility. The news of these marvellous events created a vast sensation over the whole Kingdom of Fife, and many grandees from distant quarters came to visit and congratulate the two mysterious beings whom they could contemplate under no other character than that of inexplicable prodigies. And these lovers having travelled over a long, a rugged, and dreary path beset with innumerable terrors, and strewn with piercing thorns, arrived at the hymeneal altar, and experienced the happy, the complete consummation of their long-cherished hopes. And their long and varied course of fearful hardships, which frequently produce a searing tendency, only served to render more flexible those amiable hearts that ever glowed with benevolence. And reflecting on the dreadful catastrophes, the appalling sacrifice of human life, that ever and anon were attributable to the dark Island of May, on the principle of gratitude to Heaven for the signal preservation which both had there experienced, and disinterested kindness to their fellow-mortals, they designed and caused to be executed a beacon-tower with a coal-chaffer on its summit, to warn the benighted mariners of their danger and guide them onward to their destination. This is said to have occurred about the end of the fifteenth century, and claims the merit of being the first attempt to enlighten the island. This identical beacon, based on divine gratitude and copped with genuine philanthropy, continued to shed the cheering beams over the deep for nearly a century and a-half, and is said to have been maintained solely at the expense of the originators during the whole period of their natural existence. They enjoyed a long series of matrimonial felicity, frequently

visiting the island, inspecting the luminous tower, and the solitary cave, the hallowed scene of their marvellous meeting, the being who was the honoured instrument of their preservation accompanying them in all their excursions. How the light was supported during the period that intervened betwixt their demise and the taking up of the subject by the Scottish Parliament in 1535 is not exactly stated; but about this time it was supplanted by another on a similar plan, though on a more exalted scale, by decree of the Estates, and a tax levied on the shipping for its maintenance, which produced considerable murmuring in certain quarters.

In life's early dawn, when the sunbeams of joy
Shine bright in the bosom unsullied with care,
This globe all divested of aught to annoy,
All lovely may seem and transportingly fair.
How lovely the paths all with flowerets bedecked,
Whose beauty and fragrance the senses invite;
In the breast flows a streamlet of pleasure unchecked,
While it basks in the glow of untainted delight.

But ah! thoughtless youth—how deceptive the scene?
'Tis all but enchantment alluring the heart,
Like the meteor blazing in glory serene,
Earth's fancied delights, all illusive, depart.
Ere the sun that illumines the horizon of life
Has yet to the zenith of glory attained,
The sky's oft obscured by the tempest of strife,
And hope's brightest radiance with shadows distained.

In the bosom of youth, unsuspecting and gay,
While love's tender flame in pure fervency glows,
The rude throes of fate fairest prospects bewray,
And mortals submerge in an ocean of woes.
But oft while the shades of despondency lower,
And darkness each glimmering of solace conceals,
Time, rolling in silence with mystical power,
New prospects of brighter effulgence reveals.

CHAPTER XIX.

NOTWITHSTANDING the baleful consequences of man's pristine revolt, in common with "the fruit of that forbidden tree," an opinion is still prevalent amongst the learned and wise, that man is naturally a religious being; and however vague his notions of Divinity, however wild, obscure, and bewildered may be the ideas of untutored barbarism in regard to the performance of acceptable worship, the fact supplies no evidence whatever that the opinion is built on a basis of error. Even the rudest tribes that traverse the most barbarous regions of the peopled earth, still, through the thousands of generations, exhibit confused symptoms of the primitive impress of Divinity, faintly legible in the soul immured in a dungeon of rayless ignorance, and groping mid the tangly mazes of superstition, the grovelling ideas of Deity entertained by unaided reason, sheltered and mystified by revolt, may appear absurd, and horribly revolting to the contemplative mind, illumined by divine revelation. Peculiar, indeed, may be the devotional exercises which the various climes of earth exhibit, yet the very fact that such feelings exist in untutored humanity, evinces the certainty of an intuitive conviction that some mighty existence controls the universe, pervades the boundless regions of nature, and from whose omniscient glance naught in creation lies unnoticed or disregarded.

That all the diversified tribes of men are convinced of their accountability to this great invisible being in some way or other, is clearly discovered by the various methods which darkened reason suggests as the means of appeasing his justly incurred indignation, and averting the torrent of impending wrath.

These dread forebodings of undefined vengeance likewise demonstrate an instinctive conviction of guilt on the part of millions who possess no statute of inhibition or injunction, save the dim traces of divinity originally stamped upon the soul, sullied and dishonoured by the stains of revolt; and the heart-rending, blood-chilling means of atoning for offences and expiating guilt, afford a striking proof of the appalling apprehensions that a sense of delinquency ever awakens in the conscious soul.

What civilised imagination could glance over the benighted tracts of the peopled world, and behold, without profound emotion, the sacrificial piles blazing on the blindly consecrated heights, and in awful grandeur heaving their fiery columns into the regions of space, while the hapless human victims, chained amid the furious element, writhe in torturing atonement for the guilt of their fellows? Nay, how do all the rational sympathies of nature shrink and recoil from the contemplation of scenes so revolting, so pregnant with overwhelming horror—scenes which derive their crimson colour, their horrid existence solely from a bewildered impression of religion still inherent in the mind, still perceptible amid the noxious vermin that harbour amongst the wrecks, the ruins, the rubbish of apostacy? Alas! how miserably defaced is now the once glorious stamp of divinity! No less dismal was the cloud of intellectual darkness, no less barbarous the system of intuitive religion that once prevailed in the highly favoured land of Caledonia, than that which still manifests itself in the remote islands of the ocean, where the standard of civilisation has never been erected, where the banner of revealed religion has never been unfurled, where the seraphic strains that once, with thrilling rapture, greeted the ears of the night-wrapt shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem, have never been heard. Can the rational mind conceive a spectacle

more appalling than the monstrous, the gigantic image framed of wickerwork, enclosing a group of human victims doomed to destruction, and all sacrificed at once on the blazing altar of horrid barbarity, while the naked, painted, savage Caledonians, with terrific mien, danced and yelled around the flaming pile, whose smoking incense, borne on the winds of heaven, was designed to appease the indignation of some imagined being to whom they owed their existence, and whose wrath they were conscious of having incurred? Such were the ancient characteristics of a nation now basking in the splendours of science, now enjoying the refined polish of civilisation, and glowing in the grateful beams of unfettered freedom, sacred and civil—a nation whose laws and literature have long rendered it the envy of the world.

In every age of the world's history, an inherent sense of benefits conferred, or signal deliverances effected, by invisible agency, appears to have influenced the human mind in a manner no less conspicuous than the consciousness of guilt. Hence the building of altars, the erection of pillars, and the dedication, setting apart, and consecrating stones of memorial. While others, less endued with supernatural illumination, evinced their gratitude by praising and extolling their imaginary deities, the shrines of silver and images of gold.

In various instances during the past ages of the present era this devotional feeling has frequently indulged itself at a considerable expenditure of capital. The building of churches, and other hallowed conventicles, appears to have been a favourite expression of soul-stirring gratitude on account of providential escapes from the rage of the ocean, the ravages of the hurricane, the ruins of the earthquake, the devastations of the mountain torrent, or the fiery deluge of the bursting volcano. These peculiar monuments of devotional feeling, pledged and proffered

amid the swelling tempest of heart-subduing terror, and based on the rock of soul-exalting gratitude, are still visible in various localities of the civilised world. Still here and there imposing themselves on the vision of the prying antiquary, these sacred relics of antiquity present their hoary aspect, "shattered with age and furrowed o'er with years." And the Island St Adrian of May (so designated in certain ancient records) enjoys the distinguishing honour of sustaining the mouldering remains of one of these anciently erected structures.

This edifice, destitute of every attraction save its antiquity, has been elsewhere slightly alluded to in certain notable events still legible on the time-worn page of tradition; and our present purpose is, to trace its origin through the dark clouds that obscure the ages of the past, and the peculiar circumstances from which it is understood to have derived its existence.

At what period of the world's blood-stained history did the glorious star of national independence first shed its majestic beams on the mountains, the forests, the floods of Caledonia? In what epoch of revolving time did her untutored inhabitants, wild and ferocious, first inhale the indomitable spirit of uncompromising freedom by which they have ever been characterised? Under what adventitious circumstances did the errant genius of roaming liberty first inspire their glowing bosoms with a deadly hatred of venal servility? and from what tribe of undaunted, lion-hearted mortals did the sons of Scotia derive their primitive existence? are questions so deeply involved in the shades of antiquated obscurity as to render their solution wholly impracticable.

However easy it may be to defend the fortress that was never besieged, and to exhibit resolute prowess where no conflicting elements exist, and to manifest contempt of danger in its total absence, such a state of

blest quiescence has not been the felicitous fortune of Scotland ; she is experimentally familiar with the strains of the martial trumpet, the horrors of war and the carnage of the battle-field. Her rugged domains, sacred to the soul of a native Scot, have repeatedly become the theatre of invading hostility, though never conceded to the grasp of foreign ambition ; her intrepid sons have oft sustained defeat in the field of sanguinary conflict, but never bowed to the ignominious thrall of enslaving subjugation. The imbecile court of an incensed and indignant monarch may have suppressed the national costume, under the fallacious hope of quenching the ardour of the national spirit, and extinguishing the inherent flame of independence that blazed in the Caledonian breast ; but in times of subsequent peril, when the British throne reeled amid the thunders of war, insulted monarchs rejoiced to perceive the resumption of the Celtic costume and the awakened prowess of the Celtic soul. But the dominion of the Thistle is no more the hostile theatre of foreign invasion, ravaging, plundering, and slaughter ; the ominous strains of the war-whoop have long ceased to resound, in blood-stirring echoes, amongst her heathy mountains. Her thousand streams, and brooks, and rills, and rivulets, erewhile tinged with the crimson of sanguinary conflict, roll in limpid purity along the pebbled pavement of nature, with rushing impetuosity, or steal in sluggish meanders, deep and noiseless, through the fertile valleys, blooming in rich luxuriance ; and the peaceful olive folds its shady umbrage around the proud thistle, the emblem of invincible courage. It may be remarked, however, in passing, that impetuous spirits, restless and intrepid, when wanting scope for their native energies, often lapse into a state of listless indifference, sink down from the gorgeous elevation of bold independence, and with unsinued mien stoop

to the voluntary degradation of inglorious vassalage, sneaking servility, or debasing pauperism. And, however much to be regretted, it is no less evident that a similar process of mental deterioration is presently in active operation amongst the humbler grades of Scottish society, committing deplorable ravages on the characteristic pride of that people, which has long been proverbial. This is no idle surmise based on the dreaming visions of fancy—no baseless conjecture produced at random by the power of slumbering or perverted reason—no distorted picture portrayed on the cobweb scenery of the wild imagination, but a deliberate conclusion deduced from legible facts both visible and tangible—nay, the clamorous applications for enrolment amongst the helpless recipients of parochial support, the despicable venality that numerous districts exhibit, and the populous registers of every charitable institution, afford an ostensible evidence of a most melancholy perversion of that national independence, that high-toned nobility of soul, that anciently pervaded the regions of mountain and flood. That such a peculiar species of degeneracy, increasing and augmenting in a fearful ratio, actually exists in these domains, famous for light and liberty, appears as manifest as if inscribed on the forests, the rugged rocks, and shaggy mountains with a dazzling sunbeam; and the productive cause of this remarkable development is as obviously attributable to a total change of circumstances, a fortuitous revulsion in the system of national enterprise.

It will be readily admitted by all who are conversant with their own extraction, that from their roaming ancestors, inured to athletic adventures, springing with elastic response to the wild strains of the pibroch, wielding with vigorous dexterity their bows of trusty yew, the Scots naturally inherit a proud, impetuous tempera-

ment, a reckless spirit of intrepidity, and an ungovernable impatience under restraint. And with minds thus constituted, the frequent invasions of their territories by foreign aggressors afforded ample scope for their martial predilections; and the conscious glory of their numerous victories, rendered more inflexible their proud, unbending disposition.

But, having long basked in the Morphean quiescence of meek-eyed peace, and in their industrial pursuits experienced the embarrassing vicissitudes of commerce, a species of debasing apathy has gradually insinuated itself into the intellectual empire, weakening the powers of noble independence wrapt in the toils of ignorance and subjugation; and the more predominant principle of action being cramped in its tendencies and restrained in its congenial exercise, the physical energies, yielding to the apathetic influence, become the willing slaves of listless inaction, while the mind, once the seat of lion-like nobility, like a pool of stagnant water, engenders grovelling reptiles.

Were the most patriotic philosopher to hazard an opinion that war, with its awfully desolating ravages, its sickening train of blood-stained horrors, its heartrending display of mangled and mutilated humanity, its appalling exhibitions of legalised murder, confers a blessing on any country, every intelligent philanthropist would at once denounce the sentiment as monstrous, and impugn the judgment of the being who uttered it. However, the obscure annals of ancient Caledonia cannot be dispassionately contemplated without producing an indelible impression that she derived peculiar advantages from the repeated invasions of the Roman Cæsars. From these she appears to have received the first principles of civilisation, of literature, and revealed religion—nay, even some of the Roman statutes still continue in full

force, and are occasionally acted upon by the best judges in the Scottish courts of judicature at the present day.

In consequence of these invasions subsequent to the introduction of the vulgar era, the Papal religion became gradually disseminated over the length and breadth of the country. Chapels exhibited their transverse figures in every eligible locality; convents reared their venerable heads, with imposing aspect, shooting their aspiring turrets of gorgeous statuary aloft in the mid-way air, and priests, monks, priors, and confessors, the consecrated machinery of Rome, performed their evolutions in harmony, being anointed with the golden oil of endowment.

Somewhere about the middle of the fourteenth century, so far as can be discovered, through the mystifying haze that obscures the long vanished ages of the past, a monk of the highest order in Rome was commissioned by his Holiness to visit the fanes and convents that interspersed the various romantic landscapes of Scotland. The season selected for this important expedition was by no means either propitious or inviting, being the month of November, dark, gloomy, and tempestuous; but the papal decree was absolute, and any postponement of its execution wholly impracticable. The commissioner being under the despotic influence of intuitive apprehension, that, in some ill-fated hour, he should abruptly terminate his mortal existence by means of water, therefore the days of his preparation for the voyage were the most harassing that can possibly be imagined. A total abstraction of thought rendered him utterly incapable of ordering the necessary arrangements for his comfort on the journey, and the balm of repose evanished like a hunted spectre from his nocturnal pillow, or, if it descended at all on his tumultuous senses, it was only to scare him with visions of the foaming deep, the heaving billows, the sinking bark, and the hideous shrieks of the drowning occupants.

In the very prospect of such an excursion, some would have been transported to the regions of imaginary bliss on the buoyant wings of ecstasy; their hours of lingering would have been all absorbed in joyous and delightful anticipation, and their transient intervals of refreshing slumber sweetened by delectable visions of elysian enjoyment. But how very opposite were the feelings that possessed the mind of this sacred official—feelings which, to him, though still on time's side of the dark stream, realized all the horrors of purgatory. As some abandoned delinquent sentenced to expiate his guilt on the scaffold, every hour's delay of the wind-bound vessel which was to convey him to the land of freedom seemed to him but the suspension of a decree which would, on its execution, effect a disjunction betwixt that living principle, that intellectual essence, that eternal existence, from the material fabric of exquisite mechanism which it animated: therefore, the day of his embarkation was engraved on his mental tablet as a mortal shaft charged with inevitable dissolution.

And glancing significantly on all the objects of time with which he had been long familiar, this cloistered ascetic sighed a last farewell to this visible creation and all its enticing beauties. Although his sullen deportment, his foreboding eyes, his whole sombre aspect betrayed the intense emotions of his heart, he wanted moral courage to hazard a single word of remonstrance; thus exemplifying the common adage, that "It is vain to sit in Rome and contend with the Pope."

The vessel was bound for Leith, and the purpose of the sacred commission was to honour the Scottish capital with his first official visit, and favour the Court of the reigning sovereign, David the Second, with his first efficacious benediction.

Just after the celebration of the feast of Saint Martin,

the elements of nature having assumed an inviting aspect, and the gentle breath of the atmosphere tending directly in favour of the expedition, the gallant vessel, loosed from her trammels, glided onward in glorious splendour and majestic silence till she oped the waste waters of the wide Atlantic.

From the farthest visual limits of that vast stupendous scene of interminable strife, wave rolled on wave in endless succession, assailed the restive bark that reared and plunged in noble contempt of their servile sway.

Under these circumstances, the rigid conventual, having retired to his cabin, remained in close seclusion, absorbed in meditation on his final transit; for, although no shadow of apprehended danger lowered on the brows of the dauntless mariners, he perceived in every heaving billow the gloomy harbinger of that fell catastrophe which ere long should transfer him from the society of tangible existence to the regions of invisible being. But few indeed were the fleeting hours that rolled over his devoted head ere he was thrown prostrate under that nauseous affection from which few men, unaccustomed to nautical excursions, are wholly exempted. The peculiar movement, to which he was an utter stranger, inverted the tendencies of his whole internal machinery, banished the symptoms of health from his countenance, divested the world of its charms, and rendered the unwilling subject of death regardless of all, even of life itself.

This mental lassitude, however, was transient in duration as the flimsy cloud that flits across the glowing firmament of heaven. He emerged from the shades of sickness to the meridian blaze of health more robust than he ever enjoyed; the world became gorgeously replenished with all the entrancing beauties that engage the affections of rational humanity, and he clung with

increased tenacity to life's attenuated cordage. The blazing radiance of the sun was quenched in the distant main; the crimsoned retinue of even had expired in the western horizon, and night descended in all its placid stillness. The vaulted canopy was as serene, the stars as lucid in their splendour, and the moon as unsullied in her lustre, as ever that azure infinitude, that magnificent theatre, that gorgeous display of omnipotence shone down on the world beneath.

A scene so replete with inimitable grandeur, a prospect so transcendently glorious, a theme of lofty contemplation so inexhaustible, invited the austere recluse to exchange the stagnant atmosphere of his seclusion to enjoy the exhilarating influence that breathed in gentle whispers through the ambient vault of heaven. Here, amid the glories of a midnight scene which he had never before witnessed on the mighty ocean, he stood like a rivetted statue, clinging to the cordage of the vessel to maintain his precarious footing, while he gazed with profound admiration on the spacious crystal concave bestudded with a thousand sparkling brilliants; and his entranced meditation soaring beyond those regions of vicissitude, became lost and overwhelmed in the immensity of that mysterious, all-pervading existence who "binds the sweet influences of Pleiades, and guides Arcturus with his sons."

Thus absorbed in the mighty magnitude of his soul-bewildering theme, and forgetful of the unstable position which he occupied, his hands unconsciously relinquished their grasp of the tackling on which his security depended; when, lo! a sudden lurch of the floating mansion plunged him headlong amongst the rolling billows, a prey to the rapacious monsters that roam at large in the fathomless abyss. And is the venerable conventual lost for ever amid the inscrutable wonders of the deep? No; the Papal ecclesiastic is neither fixed in the devouring jaws

of the man-destroying shark, nor ensconced in the capacious stomach of the whale, but floundering in the vessel's wake, securely locked in the clutches of an intrepid mariner, no more courageous than humane, who observed the death-staring emergency, and impelled by the swellings of sympathy, at the imminent peril of his own life, sped apace to the rescue of his fellow-creature.

Thus, by means of the pacific condition of the elements, and the dauntless, the persevering activity of man, all governed by a superintending Providence, his deliverance from the portals of death was speedily accomplished, and the Roman ambassador restored to the society of rational beings. But if a soothing glimpse of peace ever penetrated the cloudy firmament of his mind since the official announcement of his sacred embassy, it was now finally extinguished, and he regarded this untoward event as a mere foretaste of that impending fatality whereof he entertained a gloomy presentiment; therefore he firmly resolved that no circumstance however propitious or adverse, that no prospect however attractive or repulsive, be death or life the ultimatum, should ever induce him to abandon the wooden walls of his concealment till the vessel was moored in her destined haven.

But his moping retirement effected no change on the splendours of the stupendous scenery; though his visual organs ceased to behold and his fancy to admire, the expansive tapestry of heaven retained all its azure serenity; the diversified orbs, mingling an infinitude of glory, still burned with undiminished lustre; the circumambient flood, reflecting the gorgeous canopy of heaven, still teemed with a magnificent conglomeration of luminous images that danced in flickering fragments on its throbbing bosom; and the floating vehicle careered proudly amid the splendid confusion, still onward beneath auspicious stars to the land of the brave.

The austere conventual, all convulsed and deranged in his physical organs by a copious absorption of the Atlantic Ocean, though he had not actually gulped its entire contents, and his intellectual system, in all its faculties, wholly usurped by and subjugated under the grisly horrors of drowning, had retired to his couch of repose, when, lo ! his entire existence was suddenly involved in a haze of impervious stupor, as under the irresistible influence of a deadly soporific potion. His whole corporeal energies were instantly paralysed—his mental powers submerged in Lethean depths of lethargic stillness—his judgment estranged—his reason suspended—his imagination ungoverned—and his wild fancy rambled at large amongst the hideous images of its own creation. Thus caught in the mysterious trammels of enchantment, and enwrapt in the dark spell of incantation, awfully grand was the fancied landscape that flashed, that oped in all its terrific magnificence on his distempered vision. The gorgeous heavens, the entrancing subject of his previous contemplation, completely divested of their azure glory and sparkling lustre, assumed a deep veil of dismal sackcloth, dark as doomsday ; the troubled atmosphere, rushing with furious impetuosity into some tremendous vacuum, goaded the slumbering element beneath into the most boisterous agitation and unparalleled excitement, heaving its stupendous billows into the midway air, in dreadful response to the dire convulsion that raged in the void ether and shook the spheres of heaven. An awful blaze of unsupportable light burst with instantaneous flash from every pore of the sable canopy like the final conflagration of empires, while sounds of a terrific explosion pealed through the vaulted regions like the crashing combat of a thousand worlds ; the ocean quaking through its deepest recesses, and abandoning the position originally assigned it, fled

from the spectator's presence, exposed its ancient depths and countless wonders before unknown, unheard, unseen by mortals.

While the enchanted ambassador was wallowing in fancy amid this tumultuous elemental disorder, this astounding chaos of marvels, all unnerved with terror, fettered with amazement, and deluged with a torrent of overwhelming consternation, quick as the conscious thought vibrates from pole to pole, he found himself exalted on a coral pyramid, based in the bed of the ocean and towering in altitude like the brazen wonder of the world. As he gazed from thence on the wild objects of creation, animate and inanimate, another burst of appalling thunder roared through the immensity of space, rending the confines of heaven, and shaking the system of nature to its centre.

The estranged waters of the ocean, obsequious to the potent citation, returned with rushing impetuosity to the place of their primitive assignment, foaming and dashing, and raging with ruthless fury around the tower of his security. As he gazed with profound astonishment on the boiling tumult that raved and rushed around the basis of the lofty pillar on which he was magically perched, behold, on the summit of a distant billow rolling from afar, and advancing with fearful menace, appeared in awful majesty the incomprehensible genius of enchantment. His shapes, and hues, and attitudes were as multifarious, wild, and diversified as the romantic scenery which he frowns or smiles into marvellous existence. Looming in stature like the great, the gorgeous divinity, that once by sovereign decree exhibited its form by the streams of Babel, he advanced with incredible velocity, and, smiting the coral pyramid with the mystical sceptre which he wielded, the whole became a mass of irretrievable ruins, and vanished in the direful

convulsions beneath. In this dreadful emergency, this boisterous uproar of elements, the hand of some invisible being caught hold of the venerable apostle's Aaronic mustaches, by means of which he was opportunely snatched from the yawning gulf of inevitable destruction.

Suspended, as it were, by a chain of interwoven moonbeams, that faintly glimmered through the dusky veil that obscured the azure (for naught else was familiar to his vision), he skimmed the surface of the troubled waters like his intrepid, his impetuous *predecessor*; and terror-stricken after the same similitude, the chain of his suspension gradually relaxed, the billows heaved and foamed with furious menace, and his pedestals descending deep into the turbulent waste, he invoked the manes of Saint Peter in the regions of bliss to intercede for his deliverance; but no responsive sound was heard save the hoarse noise of the raging elements, and no power interposed in his behalf, until the fearful dilemma in which he was involved had actually reached its last extremity.

When, lo! an orb of translucent grandeur, burning in glory and radiating streams of stupifying splendour, illumed the sombre mantle of heaven with a brilliancy more than adequate to the pure, primitive lustre of the new-born sun; and just as the great globe itself emerged from the darkness of infinite nothing, an island, before invisible, arose from the unfathomless abyss of the ocean, and firm as the basis of the everlasting mountains, kythed itself basking amid the blaze of ethereal fulgence, an isolated world of rational inhabitants.

Here the enchanted conventual opportunely found an asylum of quiescence, a blest retreat from the fierce conflicting perils which erewhile overwhelm his whole soul in a tempest of dismay. This new creation, cast in the forge of fancy, not only supplied a fortuitous deliverance from the uproarious scene of jeopardy that foamed in

furious agitation around his quaking existence, but a thrill of inexpressible delight shivered through all the avenues of life, as if suddenly transported to the very confines of Elysian bliss.

All above, around, and beneath, was serene, tranquil, and lovely. And while his excursive eye rambled amongst the unknown objects that occupied this new horizon of marvels, a stately temple, rapid as the sheltering gourd of the peevish prophet, heaved its venerable turrets in the void, only surpassed in magnificence by its inimitable predecessor that dazzled the mountains of Salim.

While he gazed with rapt amazement on the gorgeous architecture of this hallowed edifice, an holy desire, as if divinely inspired, glowed in the secret recesses of his soul, that he might enjoy the blissful privilege of worshipping within its sacred precincts ; but no sooner had the spirit of action stirred his physical energies in eager response to the prompting emotions of his heart, than the great magician with one flourish of his magic sceptre expunged the Utopian dominion from the broad face of the visual creation, and naught remained within the range of his vision, but a wide unvaried waste of aquatic disorder.

Just at the climax of this appalling juncture, he was encompassed by a cloud of inextricable bewilderment ; and, caught in the wings of a spiral tempest, he was transported with astounding impetuosity into the pure ethereal region of the second heavens ; but the fierce propelling impulse, having exhausted its influence before he had surpassed the attractive power of his native planet, dreadfully rapid and precipitous was his long descent through the pathless wilderness of fogs and mists, and congregated vapour, till with awful plunge in the midst of the great Atlantic, he agitated its extensive empire from shore to shore.

This romantic catastrophe effectually dissolved the spell, banished the enchanted landscape, and restored the governing sceptre of suspended reason ; and returning consciousness found the abstracted ecclesiastic physically unskaited and in full possession of all his intellectual faculties.

Here the moping conventual, pent up in sequestered solitude, however competent to conduct immortals to the haven of interminable bliss, continued as ignorant of his position as the totally blind wandering at random amid the scorching sands of the East, cursed with eternal sterility. But though thus secluded almost from the cheering radiance of the sun, and bound as a felon in the mystic fetters of enchantment, the untiring vessel, yielding to the auspicious influence of the atmosphere, progressed in dashing style over the restless billows of the main. No mysterious incantation impeded her onward velocity ; no spell wrapt the senses of the vigilant mariners ; no flood of preternatural light rushed with dazzling glare on their humid vision ; no burst of thunder rent the superambient elements, and poured its deafening roar on their listening ears ; and no terrific whirlwind howled in the bending cordage or deranged the inflated canvas.

All was delightfully propitious, and the stately bark, with noble buoyancy, passed the confines of three kingdoms with incomparable despatch. As the spring of the morning faintly appeared in the orient skies, and the great effulgent luminary, still concealed beneath the dusky horizon, sent forth his gorgeous harbingers arrayed in silent grandeur, proclaiming to the night-wrapt world that darkness, with its grisly terrors, was merging its reign in the splendour of light—behold ! a shout resounded from stem to stern, announcing in natural accents, that, over the starboard bow, the Isle of Man was looming in the distance.

Various articles of oral intelligence having been occasionally addressed to the auricular sense of the seafaring Levite respecting this ducal dominion, he was seized with an irresistible curiosity to bring it within the limits of his vision. He had heard of its proximity to three kingdoms, its total independence of either, the peculiar privileges which it enjoyed, and its singular exemption from the grievous exaction of national imposts. This marvellous combination of adventitious circumstances connected with any shred of this taxed and teased and troubled theatre, so powerfully spirited on his inquisitorial organs as to induce him not to violate his vow of corporeal seclusion, but to request the removal of the iron conservative from the skylight, that he might pop out his coif-clad cranium to behold a sublunary region so distinguished, so highly favoured. And, thus constrained by the indomitable impulse of fancy, based on the ever-varying wind of uncertified rumour, he exhibited his sacred head, which, absorbed in contemplation, he continued veering from right to left on its exquisite pivot, in suitable response to the devious movements of the vessel, till the unexpected invasion of a snow-ridged billow, permitted by unskillful steerage, suddenly bathed his temples, darkened his vision, stemmed the current of his reverie, and afforded him tangible evidence, that, however proximate to a paradise in fame, his was still in a world of uncertainty, sustaining a mixed existence of shattered enjoyment, blighted prospects, and disappointed hopes, — that, whatever internal felicity prevailed within the precincts of that speck in creation which acknowledged the sway of no regal sceptre, he was experimentally convinced by the sight that its confines were but a wild, jarring jungle of turbulent elements.

Under a deep impression of these solemn convictions,

conveyed to his heart through the medium of his external senses, he withdrew his reverend head from the air and prospect of heaven, and relapsed into his solitude, like a hard-hunted cony burrowing itself in its subterranean fortress, leaving the world with all its fascinating allurements and transient delights to men of more fluctuating minds, inured by experience to a ceaseless round of secular vicissitude; whilst the floating fabric, with unremitting speed, passed and distanced far the wonder-exciting islet, pursuing her trackless course amid the sluggish calms, perplexing currents, and opposing gusts that incessantly wander amongst the rough romantic isles of Caledonia.

Tho' earth-born man wore an image divine,
However exalted the powers of his soul,
And destined in glory unfading to shine,
He still was subjected to sovereign control.
In obedience was bliss, in rebellion were pent
All the woes that e'er scowled in life's gloomiest shade;
Yet reckless of fealty, and spurning restraint,
At freedom he aimed, but to thralldom he sped.

Man's dependence on One, speaks submissive respect,
How low or exalted soever his sphere;
A breach of command is a guilt-staining act,
And guilt's the infallible parent of fear:
From the era of bliss to the age that we view,
This truth in all ages is amply sustained,
Men tainted with crime, shaking leaves will pursue,
Which conscience converts into perils unfeigned.

Still the taper of heaven, tho' environed with mist,
Man strikes with conviction of guilt and offence
'Gainst the ALL who all framed by his mighty behest,
And who lit up the sun with a visual glance.
Arraigned and condemned, and o'erwhelmed with dread,
All groped in the darkness his ire to appease,
And man for man's trespass, O, horror! was led
To the altar, sacrifice in atonement to blaze.

From the mount's heaving summit, and the grove's hallowed
 Ascended the incense in fragrant perfume, [shades,
 Whose clouds heaven's boundless expanse did pervade,
 To cancel the guilt and its merited doom.
 Thus, reason bewildered, 'mid dubious lights,
 Prepared the sweet odours, and kindled the flame,
 Attaching false colours to barbarous rites,
 That nature, enlightened, would shudder to name.

Since the Day-star of Bethl'em, with fulgence divine,
 The types and dark shadows from Christendom chased,
 Men, writhing in perils, oft favours benign
 Derived, or conceived, from vows pledged to the blest ;
 How num'rous the fanes and the convents devised,
 'Mid the dangers horrific of tempest and flood,
 By man, guilty man, when fell death, undisguised,
 Appeared on each wave foaming ruthless and rude.

CHAPTER XX.

EVERY species of animate existence, whether rational or irrational, when subjected to a prolonged series of unre-spired physical exertion, sustains a gradual prostration of powers, a relaxation of energies, and imbecility of action ; the nervous system becomes slackened and enfeebled in all its springs of impulse, the marvellous combination of muscles, fibres, and sinews that govern the vigour and active motion of the corporeal association, by reason of unremitted application, becomes powerless and inoperative, and the whole animal machinery, subjugated under the control of irresistible lassitude, descends into a lethean depth of listlessness and suspended animation. To obviate this inconvenient suspension of operations in the commercial theatre, which must frequently ensue as an infallible consequence, and to avert the flagrant abuse of the noblest material edifice, as the necessary result of

incessant application, the cunning ingenuity of man has, in all ages, been eminently successful in rendering the elements of inanimate nature subservient to his interest in furthering the business of life. Air, fire, and water, elements fierce and uncontrollable in their native character, terrific in the awful grandeur of their unrestrained influence, and pregnant with appalling horror, devastation, and ruin, appear, as it were, tamed and disciplined by the power of science into governable instruments, incalculable in their utility in accomplishing grand and important purposes in the world of commercial turmoil. By their means the boundless tracts of earth and ocean are traversed with facility and inconceivable despatch, and the most remote and sequestered regions of the accessible creation appear to have changed their position on the terraqueous globe, and approached in close proximity to each other; while the glowing orbs, that burn in glorious magnificence in the spacious firmament of heaven, subserve as unerring guides to point the dubious way of the scientific mariner as he floats on the boundless waste of unvarying sameness. Thus feats and enterprises of momentous import have been, through vanished ages, achieved which the combined sinews of a united world could never have accomplished, and one generation of intelligent mortals would have followed another and another into the rayless gulf of oblivion, possessing but a meagre acquaintance with the sphere which they are destined to occupy. Unaided by the power of inanimate nature, the great globe itself would have effected its final revolution, the sable clouds of doomsday obscured the flaming visage of the sun, and the waters of unfathomable ocean been absorbed in the fiery consummation, ere man, with all his boasted superiority, could have ascertained the boundaries of his lordship.

It was the dark, the gloomy, the tempestuous month of December, with its transient, its precarious glimpse of sunshine, sullied by the ceaseless alternations of scowling, storm-fraught clouds. The gallant ship with her precious inmate, the Papal ambassador, had now parted connection with the northern isles, and freed from the perils of the tortuous navigation, was rearing, lurching, and plunging at large on the turbulent bosom of the North Sea. The great source of all luminous existence, burning in his loftiest altitude, was spending his powerless influence on the inaccessible mountains of eternal snow and boundless regions of Antarctic ice, without a vestige of moon in the northern hemisphere to lighten the tenebrious gloom of nights protracted and cheerless. Such was now the surrounding prospect, such the dreary, the bleak, the uninviting aspect of nature on which the tempest-tossed mariners were destined to look ; and the pilot, withal, lacking the tuition of experience, was involved in a haze of dubiety as to the true course and situation of his terminus. The glorious sovereign of day, which, at this period, merely sweeps a limited segment of the dusky horizon, had just terminated his transient career and vanished in a tangly labyrinth of portentous display of freakish vapour. The star of eve, perched in the altitudes of space, displayed its sullied aspect glimmering faintly through the humid atmosphere, and night, in all its rayless majesty, commenced its early reign of tedious, heartless duration ; the swollen billows of the ocean, rolling in rapid succession from an ominous point of the compass, premonished the watchful mariners to banish slumber from their eyelids, and observe with vigilant care the motion of the elements ; and such, like a faithful dog that speeds to herald the approach of its master, ere long afforded ample evidence that they were no deceptive harbingers of disquietude. Every trace of expiring day

being absorbed in the dingy curtains of night, every star apparently expunged from the volume of creation, and the cloud-wrapt canopy having reached the climax of descending gloom, the premonitions of vengeance, the prognostics of peril, the presages of destruction, all on a sudden merged their dubious uncertainties in a fearful deluge of tangible realities. The raving tempest, sweeping the pitchy sky, howled in the binding cordage; the inflated canvas, stretched beyond the power of endurance, rent in sunder like a flimsy cobweb; while the labouring vessel, creaking and groaning in every department, yielded reclining obedience to the insupportable pressure. The frenzied impetuosity of the foaming elements beneath, combined with the ruthless, invisible fury, that of the fierce distempered influence that raged and rushed in the regions above, involved the trembling mariners in a frightful chaos of ravelled conflict and wild disorder; whilst the vivid streams of electric fire, flashing with intermittent blaze through the deep ethereal gloom, diffused a dreadful radiance over the appalling waste of death-menacing tumult. The pious recluse, immured in a dungeon of soul-subduing terror, relinquished every ray of hope in reference to time, and raised his quaking aspirations to the unknown realms of immutable duration.

As imminent danger rarely fails to excite the heart-chilling passion of fear, and fear invariably deepens religious impressions and heightens devotional feeling, the ivory crucifix, his inseparable companion, was held more straitly embraced than at any previous period of his existence, while strains of fervent piety pervaded every avenue of his soul, and quivered, with thrilling ardour, on every cord of his distracted cogitations. In this dreadful theatre of fierce elemental conflict, he discovers beauties and ravishing pathos in the graphic volume of inspiration which never before attracted the

admiration of his soul, and only lay huddled and jumbled together in the recess of memory as convenient lumber, which he could apply with effect in rounding a forcible period and promoting the flight of an oratorical climax. Tossed amid the wild tempestuous uproar, the whole current of his ingenuity and vigour of nervous energies were confined within the narrow sphere of selfishness, being barely competent to maintain his position, while the strains of the ancient minstrel appeared to his mind in all their poetic grandeur and descriptive elegance. "They mount up unto the heavens, they go down again unto the deep, their soul is melted within them; they reel and stagger like drunken men, and are at their wit's-end." And pressing the crucifix to his throbbing bosom with pious ardour, his depressed spirit derives a quickening influence from these exalted sentiments:—"He rideth on the whirlwind." "He gathereth the wind in his fists." "He bindeth the waters in a garment, and the clouds are the dust of his feet." "A man shall be a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest." Though no fortuitous casualty hung on his fleeting thoughts, not even a flimsy vapour or flitting meteor existed amid the perturbation of his intellectual empire on which the smallest hope of deliverance could be founded; still the magnificent glories of Italian scenery, the attractive splendours of Imperial Rome, the alternations of light and shade, of joy and sorrow, in a world of vicissitude, competing with the immutable Elysium of rapturous enjoyments which faith exhibited to his view, accoutred death with a sting, overshadowed the grave with a gloom which his boldest resolve was unable to abolish. And therefore on the very threshold of death, the very vestibule of the grave, the suspended moment of his mysterious transit, he, gazing on the crucifix, propounds a stipulation with Omnipotence for the safety of

his body, rather than the bliss of futurity for his soul. Behold the trembling apostle, convulsed with agonising terror, and pale with the horrors of despondency, thus addressing the senseless, powerless image, the motionless device of the soaring fancy: "O, thou blessed Emanuel, whose advent was celebrated by the ravishing symphony of angelic choirs, whose word framed the universe, whose hand governs the spheres, whose breath excites the ruthless tempest or tranquillises the infuriated elements, do thou exert thy divine power in behalf of thy trembling, thy avowed disciple, thy implicit dependant, and command deliverance from this dismal prospect, this tumultuous peril, this appalling shadow of death. Thou whose sovereign volition dissolved the shackles of death and reclaimed the vanquished captives from the tyrant's thrall, whose potent rebuke dislodged a confederate legion of demons, and dispersed the infernal encampment, what were it for thee to speak these raging elements into placid serenity, to rescue my perilled life from the devouring abyss, that the gaping savages of the dark unfathomed deep gorge not their rapacious appetite with thy last, thy noblest, thy most favoured work? Thou hast only to *will*, and that is accomplished which the utmost exertion of entire human energy could never effect, nor the machination of hell's malignant powers revoke or frustrate. And, if consistent with the infinite wisdom of thine inscrutable purposes, in tender regard, *will* my escape from this sickening scene of environing horror, and establish my trembling frame on the tame quiescent earth. Should thy merey cast my lot in a region of hope, some obscure haunt of dying mortals, as sure as thou art immutable in thine underived existence, there will I erect a dwelling-place for thine eternal majesty, a temple to the glory and honour of thy imperishable name."

At this instant a gleam of vivid light flashed with awful splendour through the breathing aperture of his sombre retirement, illuminating the horror of darkness by which he was encompassed and immured as in the dismal curtains of the tomb. A sudden thrill of amazement transfused itself through every channel and avenue of life; whilst an overwhelming gust of mingled dread and perplexing hope hurled the entire man into a deep vale of unconscious suspense, where in the trammels of living death, he slumbered for a season, insensible to the howling terrors that raged and foamed with direful fury above, around, and beneath him. In this dormant condition lay the Roman ambassador, till the veiled influence of the sun, emerging from the distant main, introduced a glimmering particle of time before unknown in the calendar of light. This was neither day nor night, but a sort of gloomy twilight that diffused itself through a convulsed atmosphere, sullied with impervious vapour, and bedimmed with drifting sleet—a mere nominal day that oozed through the screen which envelopes the future, and descended into the misty region of the vanished past, before its existence in the present could be either recognised or appreciated. In this boisterous scene of unalleviated dismay, the tempest-beaten mariners continued for several sunless days and starless nights struggling with the furious powers of the air and ocean, bewildered in their reckoning and clouded with the haze of despair, till a faint display of oriental streaks tinging the dusky horizon, heralded the anniversary of that momentous day whose glorious transpiration merged all the mighty mystified marvels of the universe into one stupendous theme of sublime mystery, beyond the ken of all created intelligence, and whose solution will occupy the fathomless ages of eternity. The tempest having now exhausted its frenzied fury, and expended its ethereal magazine,

by means of the glimmering Aurora, a dingy speck was discovered in the distance peering faintly through the hazy curtain of the morning. But what this object was, and where the place of its situation, were problems which no soul on board was competent to solve. The animated discussion which this ravelled perplexity produced on deck, and the diversity of opinion by which it was characterised, attracted the attention of the venerable conventual reposing in the close seclusion of his dormitory. And being unable to resist their combined influence on his desponding soul, he exerted all the vigour of his lungs, and hailed with stentorian accents and impetuous feelings, as a boatswain pipes all hands on the bursting of a terrific squall. And why? simply because the Babel of tongues, the exhilarating sound of land first greeted his ears when aroused from a terrifying jungle of distorted visions and ghastly images.

Land indeed it was—its proximity to the vessel dispelled every shadow of doubt as to its solid reality—but although the discovery of the mariners was sufficiently manifest, and the destination at which they aimed devoid of every dubiety, their real position on the surface of the globe was even beyond the wide limits of conjecture. So confused were their ideas rendered by the devious drifting of the vessel, that they resembled an unguided traveller, lighting on a sweet refreshing oasis in the midst of a trackless desert, doomed to eternal sterility, unwilling to leave the circumscribed patch of soul-reviving verdure, he rolls his scorched organs of vision over the interminable waste, uncertain of the course by which he might attain the goal of his pursuit. The shipmen, however, acting on the allowed principle that the spirit of inquiry is the acknowledged progenitor of intelligence, resolved on a friendly invasion of the unknown territory for the express purpose of eliciting information, from the

apparently rational occupants, in what region of the ponderous globe they were actually located. This dernier resolve was most cordially responded to by the Pope's package of divinity, the ambassador of the Church himself being eagerly anxious to place his pedestals once more on the stable element, the land of living men, when a grateful glow of pleasing wonder, of joyous satisfaction, of rapt amazement thrilled in every bosom, on the fortuitous discovery that after a dismal ordeal of toils, perils, and privations, the blessed shade of St Peter had conducted them in safety to the Key of the Forth. Here the monk, recollecting the pledge which he tendered in the agonies of despair, promptly selected a site for the performance of his vow, and forthwith proceeded with the vessel to her destination. And the next meridian sun revealed him emerging from his dormant state of existence, like a gorgeous butterfly bursting from the torpid chrysalis, arrayed in splendid canonicals, and advancing in all his sacerdotal glory towards the seat of Royalty in the Scottish capital; where, having pronounced over the King the precious benediction of His Holiness, and presented his commission, bearing the stamp of the Papal crown, he sallied forth on his sacred church-visiting embassy.

At this remote age of the world, the Island of May, this identical Key of the Forth, was more extensively peopled, according to our gleanings on that subject, than at any prior or subsequent period of its history. The inhabitants being utterly destitute of the civilising and enlightening means of either moral or spiritual instruction, debasing ignorance, with all its grisly retinue of horrid and revolting concomitants, swayed a sceptre of absolute dominion over their benighted minds; and every successive generation of those rational and accountable beings only sprang into existence more refined in bar-

barism, more expert in delinquency, and more hardened in remorseless criminality. Separated from the crowding bustle of the world, and the diversified shades of character which it incessantly exhibits; precluded by their insulated habitation from all intercourse with enlightened society, and placed as it were beyond the pale of all government, civil or ecclesiastical, they admitted no restraint save the waters by which they were environed, and acknowledged no sovereign control beyond the dictates of their own untutored will. Indeed so inefficient was the law at this period for the suppression of delinquency in any quarter of Scotland, and so partial and dilatory in its execution, that the spoliation of the less powerful by the cupidity of influential might was invariably winked at as a trifle unworthy of notice. And if such scenes of rapine, plunder, and usurpation were enacted with impunity in the very cradle of legislation, in the bosom of judicial authority, and full in the flaming face of the many-eyed sun, what could possibly be expected in a solitary region of uncultivated humanity, remote from every shadow of civil control? The islanders were all affined to each other, either by the sinews of consanguinity or the silken fibres of hymeneal attachment, and consequently leagued in confidential confederacy, which invariably manifested itself in their traffic with strangers. And as the proceeds of every fortuitous windfall were uniformly distributed throughout the encampment with punctual equality, no insidious feeling of envy, swelling in the bosom, induced the disruption of friendship or incited to civil commotion. Previous to the nocturnal illumination of the island, it was the hapless scene of numerous shipwrecks, the deplorable cause of many a melancholy sacrifice of life and property, from which appalling casualties the inhabitants derived their principal subsistence. Hence the

hoarse roaring of the boisterous surf, the dreadful crashing of the ill-fated vessels, and the heartrending shrieks of the drowning mariners, fell with similar effect on their listening ears as the din of war, the clashing of armour, the thunder of battle, and the groans of the wounded on those of starving, hunger-bitten wolves. And however horrid the idea, however shocking to the more refined sympathies of the present age, however foul the stigma entailed on the human character, frequently have the shipwrecked unfortunates who escaped the yawning perils of the ocean been unsparingly murdered by the ruthless act of these relentless spoilers — a practice which, in more recent ages, prevailed to a fearful extent in many parts of civilised Europe, amongst certain tribes of accountable beings possessed of no feelings save those which agonised the corporeal senses, and governed by no principle more illustrious than the sordid gratification of their lawless propensities. And the sole design of this barbarous alternative was, not to prevent any foreign invasion of their sea-girt territory, but to remove all probable cause of molestation in the exercise of their appropriating tactics, and that the glorious windfall might not be frustrated by any interested survivor reclaiming the spoils which they had captured. But whatever degree of callous insensibility men inured to crime may often exhibit, and however invulnerable to the miseries of hapless, suffering humanity, every mind, however hardened in vice, is not composed of materials sufficiently robust to sustain through life the pressure of innocent blood. And though inviolable secrecy characterised the denizens of the May island in all their unamiable procedure, a circumstance once occurred that led to the conviction and ignominious death of two of their plundering confederates.

A galiot, from the Netherlands, bound to the port of

St Andrews, having encountered a dismal series of tempestuous weather, the crew became immured in a dungeon of gloomy apprehension, and entangled in a mazy labyrinth of warping perplexities. During seven revolutions of the great globe were they subjected to heartless days of unvarying tempest, and cheerless nights of darkness and horror amid the heaving billows of the foaming ocean, shivering beneath the frowning scowl of inclement heaven. At midnight the sea-beat mariners, exhausted with toil, benumbed with cold, and all dispirited by fruitless exertion, discovered amid the snowy surf a dark incomprehensible mass, towards which they were rapidly impelled by the impetuous fury of the elements. The vessel, logged and unmanageable, resisted the governing influence of the rudder, and was driven at random by the pressure of the tempest, so that every hope of avoiding a dreadful collision, and every prospect of averting the fatal result, was totally effaced from the poor hapless souls in trembling suspense. The awful moment of death and devastation revolved apace; the shattered bark, wallowing in a surge insuperable, beating with violence against the crags of adamant, reeled and dashed and smothered in the direful uproar of elements. A simultaneous shriek from the dinsome theatre of death resounded with blood-chilling vibrations over the turbulent waste, and rang in shivering echoes through the wide tenebrious concave. The piercing accents of misery, ever ungracious in the ears of sympathetic humanity, reached the dormant senses of the brazen-hearted islanders as, huddled in filth and wretchedness, they slumbered in sluggish repose, lulled to rest by the howling of the tempest, and the wild imagination rambling among shattered wrecks, craggy cliffs, floating goods, and perishing mortals. But as no specific sound can possibly produce on every ear an indiscriminate uniformity of effect, the

heart-rending shrieks of distress were to them as the shouting of the vintage, or the joyous strains of the harvest-home, and while the radiant visage of the sun was yet concealed in the boisterous bosom of the distant main—while the sable curtains of night were hardly tinged with the grey glimmering twilight—the humid star of the morning scarce peering through the dusky cloud beheld those rustie wreckers, those vigilant watchers at the portals of destruction, speeding with elastic step and hearts inflated with expectation towards the melancholy scene of horror and desolation. But one being, more distinguished than his fellows for the agility of his limbs and superior elasticity of his locomotive springs, arrived first at the ghastly goal; and perceiving one of the hapless unfortunates clinging with the iron grasp of expiring nature to a rugged cliff, and with his eyes only imploring the arm of relief, he surveyed the wretched sufferer with a grin of disappointment, and, advancing with fiendish resolve, lannched him from his hard-earned position into the boiling flood beneath, to mingle with his comrades in the darkness of death. It has frequently been observed that twin-brothers, or sisters, exhibit a striking similarity both in their external appearance and internal qualities, whether attractive or repulsive, whether virtuous or vicious. And in the present instance the fact appears manifestly exemplified. A twin-brother of the callous image of humanity above mentioned, following rapidly in his wake, descried a raw-boned stripling, alternately visible and buried in the surf, struggling to deliver himself from the ruthless dominion of the waves by means of some buoyant material to which he was attached; and just when his desperate efforts were about to be crowned with success, and while his bosom was heaving with the joyous prospect of gaining a safe footing on a solid portion of the globe, he

received from the heartless demon a final salutation, such as a youthful shepherd with his sling once greeted the supercilious giant of Gath, which extinguished the flickering taper of life ; and the receding waters disclosed the bleeding remains of active intrepidity blended with the wrecks of the vessel and the spoils of the tempest. Having now effectually precluded the possibility of any human interference, they reaped an ample harvest, unmolested by any opposing element, and unrestrained by any legal charge of trespass. But though their cup of prosperity was large and capacious, and full to overflowing, the hideous attendant of vice had mingled a bitter ingredient in the draught. Seized by the gnawing compunctions of conscience, and griped by the smart twinges of remorse, every hour of solitude was an hour of misery unmingled. The wild imagination incessantly reflecting the image of their murdered victims on their disordered vision, ghastly apparitions, grinning with horrid grimace, dogged and haunted the delinquents in every department of social intercourse, converting the island into the antechamber of Pandemonium, and their very existence into a mundane hell. In the dark season of midnight slumber, when all nature courts the renovating balm of repose, the waking fancy, sporting with relentless cruelty, tortured them with appalling visions. Every morning twilight oped the portals of a theatre crowded with horrid spectacles of staring vengeance through their eyelids ; and every falling eve descended with a dismal gloom of accumulating horrors. The azure expanse stretched over their guilty blood-stained heads, and, glowing in all its diversified magnificence, seemed wholly despoiled of beauty and destitute of charms as the frowning vault of a dreary sepulchre. The world beneath, with all its infinite variety of sensual delights, was transformed into a howling jungle of repulsive sights, an

orchestra of discordant sounds, a waste of grisly terrors : the boundless universe, by the sleight of vice, literally converted into a dismal region of sepulchral gloom, crowded with grinning spectres and ghastly apparitions. No marvel, then, that life was an unvaried course of insuperable endurance, for who could sustain an existence so dreadful ? So tumultuous became the stirrings of conscience, such the direful pressure on the internal machinery, that naught but full development of the crime seemed capable of assuaging the fury of the tempest—this the only safety-valve by which a dread explosion of nature's magazine could possibly be averted ; an explosion which, like the rending power of an earthquake or bursting volcano, would have shivered the exquisite framework of the human structure into a thousand fragments, and scattered the lovely constituents of man, physical and intellectual, in the winds of heaven. The silvery moon had six times filled her horn since the ill-fated Dutch vessel launched forth on her disastrous voyage, and no glimpse of intelligence having transpired from the place of destination, the mysterious silence, surcharged with ominous conjecture, extended their dark foreboding shadows over the port of her departure. In the course of events, another vessel from the same quarter, and destined for the port of Leith, passing in close proximity to the island, came in contact with a piece of floating wreck bearing the name of the identical galiot, in legible characters. This circumstance excited intense interest in the crew respecting the hapless fate of their countrymen. And having reported the matter immediately on their arrival, officials were forthwith despatched to the island on a mission of inquiry. Here a scene presented itself to their astounded vision, that, sudden as the bolt from the lowering cloud, flashed fell consternation through every avenue of the

soul. The first that greeted their advent was one of the raving, self-accused delinquents, with prominent eyeballs staring and rolling in wild disorder; his grinning lips, and faltering tongue, with impetuous precipitance, while yet the seeds of inquiry immatured, lay fostering in the mines of thought, disclosed appalling facts polluted with blood, conceived in hell, matured by fiendish malignity, and clothed in horror. "Luck," says he, while every joint with quaking agitation was ready to start from its socket, "Luck to the black tufty head o' 'im peerin' aboon the water! Luck how the life-blood gushes out o' that hole atwixt his twa glowrin' een, just whaur I ettled the round whin bullet at the very time he was glammin' for a laud o' the crag! Luck, he's comin', an' the ghaists o' the hale crew flockin' round 'im, an' a' the gruesome clanjamfrey frae the boddom o' the sea gapin' to devour me at ane gabble." Thus raved the felon, thus he vented the horrific disquietude that raged in his bosom, foully crimsoned with blood, while he cowered and sneaked with appalling terror behind the legal authorities, to elude the grasp of the avenging apparitions.

At this instant of awful astonishment comes his twin-brother, measuring the distance with ghost-hunted stride, as if all the fiends of the infernal regions were hurling at his heels. He, too, had his soul-harrowing tale of murderous inhumanity to unfold, of hapless shipwrecked victims slaughtered by his hands after having escaped the dangers of the foaming flood. His pale, emaciated visage, disfigured with ghastly contortions, effected incessant transitions from one shoulder to the other with flashing rapidity, as if watching the hostile attacks of surrounding furies; whilst the frightful agitation that reigned with absolute dominion over the entire corporeal system, bewrayed the extreme perturbation of his dis-

quieted soul. The condition of the infatuated king of Babylon, when he perceived the hand mysterious writing his doom in the hall of profanity, could not represent human nature in a plight more deplorable. The precognition of the other inhabitants of the island elicited such a tissue of prevarication and discordant versions of the melancholy fact as was amply sufficient to establish the plundering confederacy that there existed, and to confirm the truth of the self-convicting declaration of the guilty images of personified misery and wretchedness. Having passed through the usual formalities of criminal jurisprudence, they were both executed somewhere about the South Ness, contiguous to the scene of their inhuman barbarity, according to the faint time-worn page of tradition.

Although this barbarous policy, only consonant to the feelings and principles of an apostate spirit, was practised for centuries subsequent to this period, the oral conservatory connected with this island appears to retain no other capital conviction. A black cloud of suspicion has often hovered over this sea-girt dominion, and the civic authorities of Crail have been repeatedly transported thither for the purpose of investigating suspicious circumstances in connection with disastrous and fatal shipwrecks; but the coalition of sentiments was so ingeniously conducted as to frustrate effectually the ends of justice by guarding every avenue leading to the goal of crimination. The more recent instance of suspected murder, whose traditional history holds a prominent status in the chamber of recollection, occurred about the beginning of the eighteenth century. A sloop from Methal, laden with salt for the north of Scotland, became involved in a tempest, and enveloped in stupifying haze, which has ever been the productive cause of disaster on this island. The fleecy influences of the sun had vanished

from the western skies, the silver moon was scattering her pallid beams over the ceaseless verdure of another hemisphere, the twinkling stars, that nightly cheer the wide ethereal expanse, shed forth no sparkling lustre, and the artificial flame that, in the midway air, blazed on the lofty beacon, and flashed and flickered in the tempest, shed no transfixing ray through the foggy mantle of obscurity by which it was environed; and thus the benighted mariners, abandoned to the absolute reign of unchequered darkness, continued groping their random way amid the yawning perils of the deep, till a dread collision with the island consigned the entire crew to the gloom of oblivion. Although this fatal catastrophe appeared enveloped in a veil of mystery impervious, some invidious spirit, riding on the rapid wings of the tempest, conveyed an insinuous whisper, blended with the roar of the ocean, that the captain of the vessel had escaped the perils of the deep only to fall beneath the murderous stroke of the ruthless islanders. This startling insinuation soon obtained extensive circulation over the East Coast of Fife, and the magistrates of Crail, with other legal authorities, were forthwith transported to that isolated speck of the universe, where a court of judicial inquiry was constituted in order to expiscate the facts connected with the alleged barbarity; but, although certain revolting symptoms afforded ample evidence that the horrid crime had been actually perpetrated, so studiously cautious were the accused, so sullen and reserved were their communications on the subject, that nothing could be elicited on which to found a criminal indictment against any of them, and the investigation consequently terminated in a volume of vapour.

The sacred ambassador having now accomplished his tour amongst the heathy mountains, bending forests, straths and streams of Scotland, and having completed

his apostolic survey of the hallowed fanes and convents that cast their shadows over her blood-stained soil; having received the royal sanction, he revisits the Island of May—that key of hope to bewildered mariners, tossed and buffeted amid the perils of the deep—that last object in the theatre of time, which scores of perishing mortals are destined to behold with the orbs of material vision, and by whose gladdening aspect himself had been loosed from the gloomy dungeon of despair. Here, solely influenced by a due respect to the pious obligation, the soul-binding vow propounded in the season of extremity, he planned and founded a convent, which, under the surveillance of the Church, was ultimately brought to completion. This memorial of the monk's providential preservation, amid the uproarious conflict of infuriated elements to which he was exposed in the course of his voyage, never presented any conspicuous features of attraction, either with respect to magnitude or gorgeous architectural splendour. It originally was, what it still continues to exhibit, a pile of durable masonic workmanship, contracted in dimensions, plain, humble, and destitute of all ostentatious decorations. Its unroofed walls, crumbling into dust beneath the corroding influence of time, still mark its existence, and preserve its place amongst the antiquities of Scotland. From concurrent circumstances, it appears highly probable that this ancient monastic edifice was originally dedicated to St Adrian, though served by the monks of St Augustine, and governed by the Prior of Pittenweem. Its primeval existence seems to have been coeval with that antiquated edifice on the north coast, constructed under the auspices of the same reigning sovereign, designed for similar purposes, and consecrated by St Monan. These remarks exhibit the origin and history of the convent on the Island of May, whose rugged remains still attract the

attention of the antiquary ; remarks culled from the faint glimmerings of tradition, almost extinguished by the thick haze of oblivion that time has gathered round it.

Since this varying world on its axis first whirled,
And man did in primitive glory appear,
What a deluge of change has defaced the wide range
Of this mighty, this ponderous sphere !
On its surface unveiled, yon bright world has beheld
Its diversified garniture, living and dead,
Disfigured in face, both in fashion and grace,
And all in the shades of oblivion laid.

And things still remain on the mount and the plain
Which ages long lost did in splendour uprear ;
Though naught tells on earth their distinction of birth,
Yet contemplative minds still behold and revere.
For man, though his fair intellectual star
Be sullied with clouds and with shadows o'ercast,
Yet illumed by the shine of its radiance divine,
He surveys both the future, the present, and past.

How the fancy reels back when we gaze with respect
On the piles monumental, deep furrowed with age,
That cent'ries ago in magnificence shone,
And figured in glory on Time's fleeting stage !
How the powers of the mind, in a phalanx combined,
Round the mouldering wrecks of antiquity cling ;
How reflection ransacks the obliquis tracts,
And scenes from the darkness of chaos upbring !

There's a magical spell (whate'er be their tale)
In the towers, and the fanes, and the castles of yore,
That trammels the soul in a hallowed control,
Inspiring the pensive with mystical lore.
Resistless it steals o'er the heart, while it feels
Emotions new kindled ; and lost in the theme,
Man muses sublime 'mid the ruins of time,
That silently whisper, " Life's all but a dream."

CHAPTER XXI.

IN tracing the history of empires the most magnificent, the most mighty and populous that ever adorned the surface of the world, we can only ascend to a certain epoch as the goal and limit of our inquisitorial research. Here, arrested in our progress, restrained in our career, and suppressed in our retrospective pursuit, we stand as on the utmost verge of creation, absorbed in contemplation, locked in amazement, and warpt in the toils of inquiring wonder. And as the intrepid voyager, intercepted in his course by an impassable barrier of polar ice, reflects with disquietude on his abortive project and frustration of purpose ; so influenced by an irresistible desire to penetrate still farther into the barbarous ages of cloud-wrapt antiquity, we thrust our visual orbs into the thick mist of vanished generations, but the rays of vision, obstructed by the impervious darkness, recoil from the fruitless effort. And if the history of nations burning in glory and dazzling the world with their splendours be thus environed with a haze of dubious uncertainty, accumulated by the mass of revolved ages, what can be expected of any isolated portion of the universe which the trumpet of fame has never celebrated, and whose existence, remote and unassuming, has never emerged beyond the dusky horizon of sombre obscurity ? In reference to the former, it is clearly observable, that the most antiquated period of authentic history is united to an almost interminable stream of mysterious oriental tradition, extending beyond the dark confines of the antediluvian world, and still unfold in the loftiest strains of national prepossession a tale embellished with the greatness, the grandeur, and glory of antiquity, which the rushing waters of the universal deluge have not been

able to obliterate; but the latter having no celebrity in the world where they exist, and destitute of those peculiar features of attraction that invariably shed a halo of imperishable glory around the distinguished possessors, the history of their ancient existence soon vanishes in the rayless gulf of elapsed centuries. Even the genius of tradition, uncharmed by the glittering foil of renown, cuts short his meagre tale, winds up his stunted narrative, and abandons the whole to the sullen silence of the tomb and the unchequered darkness of chaos. Thus numerous insulated features, in the broad face of creation, however important in modern ages, and whatever distinguishing status they occupy in the commercial world, they possess not even a nominal being in the buried ages of antiquity; and they are as little heard of beyond a limited period in retrospect, as if they were adjuncts of the world supplied by the author in a second edition of the universe. This historical obscurity appears strikingly exemplified in respect to the Island of May, the subject of our present consideration. Authentic history barely peeps through the dark postern of antiquity, and errant tradition, with its ever-varying narrative, becomes totally exhausted, and finally expires amid the dusky clouds of a few revolved centuries that mystify the wide horizon of evanished time; and all is abandoned to the wild quixotic flights of romantic fancy, or the hap-hazard sallies of conjecture partially warranted by dubious appearances in connection therewith. It is recorded in a preceding chapter of this work, that the waters of the Forth are visibly invading the solid portion of the globe in their immediate vicinity, and gradually extending their boundaries on either side. It appears distinctly evident, however, that at some very remote period of the world's history, the sphere of their boisterous operations has been much more extensive than

that within which they seem at present apparently circumscribed ; and future centuries will yet revolve and vanish amid the ruins of elapsed time ere the abandoned territory, at the present advancing ratio, be fully recaptured and ceded to the empire of Neptune. Although these facts be clearly established by observation and experience, how this peculiar tendency to advance and recede is actually produced on the fluctuating element, and how this alternate action and reaction are periodically promoted and maintained, constitute a problem too deep, too complex, too mysterious for solution on any acknowledged principles of science ; therefore, however familiarly acquainted every attentive observer may be with visible effects and consequences, they can only be associated with other marvellous appearances in nature for which no ostensible cause has yet been assigned.

In the bosom of this extensive branch of the German Ocean, this important commercial thoroughfare, this vital source of inexhaustible treasure, several other islets of no inconsiderable note uplift their romantic heads, diversifying the undulating scene, and affording a beautiful relief to the lengthened sameness of the watery prospect. These, like stepping-stones in a gentle streamlet, are not wholly destitute of utility, but in their respective situations are of important service to the sons of enterprise that traverse the boundless wastes of the trackless ocean, conducting them, step by step, through the perilous avenue bounded on all sides with danger, death, and devastation, till they reach the busy haunts of maritime commerce.

Next in proximity to the May, in a westerly direction, the Bass presents its rugged aspect towering far beyond the streaming flood, that in alternate tumult and slumbering quiescence, surrounds its solid, its immovable basis. On account of its lofty elevation and its perpen-

dicular altitude, it is extremely difficult of access to the whole unwinged creation. It is by no means cursed with desolation or sterility. Here fleecy flocks find pasture on its summit, thousands of sea-fowl nestle in its rugged cliffs, and the face of man is visible amongst them. In ages less felicitous than the present, when oppressive persecution, with scowling aspect, hoisted the the crimson ensign in the realm of freedom; when clouds of impending horror darkened the moral horizon, and dread convulsion shook the empire of social existence; when the fawning minions of blood-stained tyranny, exerting their assumed prerogative, wielded the iron sceptre of domination over the liberties of Scotland; when all was involved in the horrors of rapine, spoliation, and slaughter, this rocky speck, that lifts its hoary head in the liquid expanse, escaped not the unhallowed tempest of war. Its proud elevation, its inaccessible ramparts, and the unbending magnanimity of its garrisoned inmates, rendered it obnoxious to the rankling suspicions and heart-burning jealousy of an affronted enemy. And it was subjected to all the dread anticipations, the foreboding horrors, the frightful privations of a sacked city. Nevertheless, it maintained its defensive position amid all the hostile attacks, the appalling menaces of the dominant foe, and only yielded to capitulation on conditions of its own framing—conditions illustrious for stability of purpose, philanthropic nobility of soul, and a magnanimous principle of patriotism, fixed and unshrinking as the basis of the fortress itself.

West of this notable rock, renowned in the history of Scotland's griefs, the luminous Isle of Inchkeith emerges from the stream, looms on the vision of the home-bound mariner, and cheers the night-wrapt sky with its lofty intermittent flame. This detached portion of the solid

world exhibits no monotonous aspect, as would a barren rock ; but subject to the vicissitudes of the changeful climate it inhabits, its features ever vary with the ceaseless changes of time. The soft whispers of spring, the life-inspiring balm, gently wafted on the vernal zephyr, arrays its surface in flowery vegetation. The scorching influence of summer, when the flaming sun, in the full vigour of his radiant magnificence, blazes in the heights of the fathomless azure, russets the freshness of the blooming verdure. The surly scowl of winter, when the hyperborean blast sweeps with resistless fury along the cloud-wrapt canopy, diffuses a withering blight over the isolated empire, and invests its entire domains in the hoary vesture of decrepit age ; whilst the imperious billows of the Forth, impelled by dread ethereal impulse, thunder with stupendous magnificence around its invulnerable precincts. In connection with this little island there is an ancient tradition in perfect keeping with the antiquated notions of enchantment so prevalent in every age and country unillumined by the splendours of science. At the period here referred to, every event, however trivial in its nature, that manifested itself in the absence of a visible cause, was invariably attributed to the direct interposition of supernatural agency ; and wherever such apparently causeless event appeared it uniformly spread consternation, terror, and dismay over the entire sphere of its rumoured existence.

A respectable farmer situated on the southern strand of the Forth, and whose lands extended to the margin of the stream, was one morning struck with heart-freezing surprise to discover a considerable portion of his growing corn cropt and carried away, as if by a ravaging swarm of locusts. This was no Morphean delusion, aggravated by the humid haze of the morning—no agri-

cultural apparition or figment of the alarmed fancy—no illusive phantom conceived and fostered by the wild imagination, but a palpable plunder of the precious fruits in embryo, a dread frustration of the husbandman's hope. Every morning as it transpired from the fathomless jungle of future events, disclosed to the hapless yeoman a wider scene of increasing devastation, a gathering gloom around his autumnal prospects, and the grisly image of ruin staring him broad in the face. Whilst the devastating cause continued still involved in a labyrinth of inextricable perplexity, which all the philosophy of the district was incompetent to unravel, no pestilent visitation of those destructive orientals that oft despoil the luxuriant foliage of the East had discovered themselves to the vision of living men, and no herds of browsing animals, by which such havoc might have been perpetrated, were understood to have any location in the district. It was therefore gravely imputed to the black ringleader of all mischief, the dreaded prince of the infernal regions; and the visible print of a huge cloven foot, in the theatre of destruction, afforded strong presumptive evidence of the mysterious fact. Mustering all the moral courage and fiend-defying fortitude of which the soul of man was at that period possessed, and which desperation was calculated to inspire, the master and his hinds, well fortified with the fear-disarming draught, resolved to watch while night drew her sable curtain round the universal chamber of slumbering nature, in order to establish the fell conjecture by the testimony of their waking senses. It may here be observed, that the vital atmosphere, at certain seasons of the year, becomes impregnated with a vapour of a peculiar quality, that exercises a deceptive influence on the organs of vision, so that distant objects loom much larger on the retina than they are in reality, and assume appearances very

different from those which the forming hand of nature originally assigned to them. This seems clearly exemplified in the present instance. When the sun, with all the dazzling splendours of his burning radiance, had descended beneath the dusky horizon, and his glorious pageantry evanished amid the deep nocturnal shades, the rural expedition sallies forth on their vigilant mission ; and, whilst governed by an irresistible feeling of curiosity and anxiety mingled with terror, they rolled their humid eyes around the dreaded locality, a dingy figure of appalling magnitude appeared slowly emerging from the peacefully undulating flood, and advancing towards the scene of spoliation. The intrepid watch sent forth a simultaneous shout, which partook much more of the quality of terror than of triumph, which echoed through the silent void, shivered along the craggy margin of the stream, and reverberated on their ears with such astounding effect, that the post of honour was deserted, and each sought his personal safety in the fleetness of his heels. And what heroic soul with triple courage fired would have dared to maintain a position so awfully environed with horror ? For, in conjunction with the yelling confusion of sounds, like the growling vibration of distant thunder, that assailed their astonished ears, their glistening eyes, or quaking fancy, perceived the monstrous fiend make a furious sally, with a mouth yawning like a devouring vortex, as if ready to pounce on the trembling guard like a tiger on his prey. But, having fled aloof from the blood-chilling presence of the imaginary demon, they hazarded a pause, and ventured to shoot a rear-ward glance into the vale of dread ; when, lo ! amid the receding shades of the early glimmering twilight, they beheld the horrific ravager abandon the theatre of devastation, and vanish into the flood from whence he emerged. Just at this crisis, the shrill clarion of the cock was

heard from the barnyard proclaiming in cheerful strains the birth of the morning—a sound which no ghost, goblin, kelpie, or devil that ever marred the face of this beauteous creation possessed effrontery to resist. Strikingly dreadful was the hue and cry that pervaded the district, and by a full decision of the court of conjecture, this mysterious spoiler was declared to be nothing less than the sovereign prince of the kelpies, though in reality it was nothing more than a huge black bullock of no ordinary dimensions. This four-footed marauder was one of a herd that had been transported to the island for pasturage during the summer, and like too many bipeds more highly exalted in the scale of existence, was influenced by an irresistible passion of covetousness. And in the slumbering season of stilly silence, when all nature lay wrapt in the curtains of night, he stole away from his sleeping associates, and swam to the mainland; where, having glutted his appetite, he again took the water and rejoined his companions before the many-eyed sun had dispelled the nocturnal shades in which he was enveloped. Whenever any abstruse problem is fully demonstrated, the mystery in which it was wrapt entirely vanishes like a flimsy vapour before the beams of the vigorous sun. And how this enterprising animal became so plump, fat, and sleek, though frequently observed lolling in the lap of indolence, while his fellows were assiduous in stanching the cravings of hunger, became at once apparent. And although the long puzzled yeoman sustained considerable damage in his crops, a good fat bullock presented itself in the shape of compensation, for the isolated herd was his own exclusive property.

As the proud vessel, with majestic prow, bounds over the briny wave, pursues the receding horizon apace into the invisible regions of the western sky, and unfolds to

the vigilant eyes of the watchful mariner objects before imperceptible, the beautiful islet of Inchcolm, with all its garniture, ancient and modern, opes upon his vision. This little sea-girt speck in the creation, though apparently veiled in the dusk of obscurity, is not without a name in the world and a meed of celebrity in the annals of history. Here an antiquated seminary of learning exhibits its smouldering remains, deformed and shattered beneath the pressure of accumulated centuries; here science, extending her plummy pinions, wafted the last fair work of heaven from the degrading sphere of grovelling uncultivated nature to a glorious elevation of knowledge, civilisation, and polished refinement. Every degree of advancement in the acquisition of knowledge uniformly operates as a stimulant, prompting the student onward to another, and creates a more ardent desire to wade deeper in the mazes of perplexity in quest of higher attainments and nobler discoveries. Actuated by this peculiar impulse, tradition relates that two male infants, supposed perfect in all the organs of speech, were placed upon this islet (some say Inchkeith), under the surveillance of a person deaf and dumb, and totally secluded from intercourse with any speaking machine, in order to ascertain what language they would acquire by the mere tuition of nature; and if the authority already quoted be at all worthy of credence, in process of time the two innocent exiles returned to the mainland conversing fluently with each other in pure Celtic accents, alleged to be the language of their parents. The soil seems peculiarly adapted for a kitchen-garden, being famous for the multitude and magnitude of its onions, which are cultivated to a considerable extent.

Contemplating the situation of these four islands, their direct bearing from each other, and the nature of the submerged ground that occupies each intervening space,

it seems by no means improbable that at some remote period of the world's history, they were all connected by an isthmus ; or, in other words, that the whole comprised but one undivided portion of the solid universe ; and, consequently, the waters of the Forth flowed and receded in two distinct channels, but when or by what means this mysterious process of mutilation was accomplished, whether by the incessant action of the turbulent element, or by an instantaneous disruption of the solid materials, produced by some prodigious convulsion of nature, appears secreted beyond the pale of conjecture ; but still the obvious event excites the inquisitive principle, and urges the adventurous fancy to reel backward through the dark postern of elapsed time, and with an eye of eager scrutiny, ransack the vale of accumulated ages in quest of the productive cause. With flight obscure and devious she abandons the visible present, and roams through the oblivious regions of the past to the misty regions of the antediluvian world ; and seizing hold of that memorable epoch when the fountains of the great deep exploded at the frown of incensed Omnipotence, when the latent waters belched with resistless impetuosity from the great central cavity of the globe—when the fructifying clouds of heaven discharged, in rushing cataracts, their accumulated stores on the surface of the saturated earth—when every wimpling rill was converted into a rolling, rapid, impassable river, bursting asunder every restraining barrier, and triumphing over all human opposition, till the wide world became one unbounded expanse of monotonous water ; seizing on that inscrutable convulsion of nature, the inquisitive fancy ascribes to it the sole cause of this mysterious disruption of territory, and the formation of these diversifying specks that rise amid the waters of the Forth. As the sprightly warblers, that vocalize the forest with their artless melody,

flit from one verdant bough to another, so the errant imagination, ever restless, ever indulging her unfettered extravagance, flies from one romantic conclusion to another with the fleet rapidity of a thunderbolt. Displeased with the stability of her assumed position, she makes a transit, sudden and swift as the flash from the lowering cloud, from the dread convulsion of the universal deluge to some more recent period of the world's eventful history; and having canvassed the smouldering combustion that lurks in the latent caverns of the globe, she fixes her talons on the horror-charged earthquake, that rends the rocks of adamant, dissevers the sinews of creation, and inverts the order of nature, converting attractive beauty, grandeur, and utility into a scene of repulsive deformity, horror and naked desolation. With this terrific desolation she combines the influence of volcanic eruption equally nameless in the annals of history, when opposing elements, jarring in the dark depths of unexplored nature, poured forth a fiery deluge involved in clouds of sulphureous vapour, shaking the ponderous sphere of terrestrial existence, hurling cities with all their antiquated glory into the gulf of eternal oblivion, or overthrowing the cloud-capped mountains of immemorial antiquity, and banishing rivers and fertilising streams into perpetual exile. Thus wandering in the dubious paths of conjecture, the ever busy imagination ascribes to these uproarious events all such unaccountable features in the aspect of creation; but though it seems obvious that such a tract of land, as previously described, exhibited itself in that great branch of the German Ocean subsequent to the first revolution of time's complex machinery, when or by what means it became subdivided into these isolated localities, is a problem abstruse and difficult, whose certain solution will baffle the last

descendants of Adam, and absorb the last sands of expiring time.

Since the lordship of man on its axis first turned,
And oceans unbounded and fathomless flowed;
Since the sovereign of lights in the firmament burned,
And the cold naked earth with his radiance first glowed;
Since the mountains aloft their proud summits upheaved,
And the fountains down gushed, fertilizing the plains;
Since forests, new sprung, their fresh foliage waved,
'Twere folly to think the globe changeless remains.

Unceasing it rolls in the regions of space,
But once, 'tis opined, was its motion suppressed—
Incessantly changing position and place,
Responding anon its creator's behest.
'Mid its veins and recesses, in darkness concealed
From the vision of mortals, war absolute reigns,
Whose influence—waste and mutation ensues,
O'er the sphere of creation where'er it obtains.

Vicissitude stalks through the world's wide range,
Her signet's on all its components impressed,
Its whole constitution's a theatre of change,
Evinced in its aspect, or locked in its breast.
See islands unnumbered in solitude rear
Their visage romantic in fathomless seas,
And lakes, rolling rivers, and oceans appear
Where wide-spreading forests once waved in the breeze.

Where mountains their rough shaggy summits upheaved,
Pure rivulets meander in hollow ravines,
And big swollen streams, of their sources bereaved,
Resign their domains to the tall shady pines.
Old empires extensive, and continents vast,
Bisected with rivers, new features assume,
As when by intestine commotion's rude blast,
Fair landscapes of beauty wild deserts become.

So changed is the world since the author of light
First kindled the sun by a visual glance,
Or the genius of evil, successful in sleight,
All nature involved in a direful mischance;
To peep were the primitive lord of the soil
From his mother's cold bosom, her face he'd disown,
Nor once recognise the old scene of his toil,
But look as transferred to a planet unknown.

FINIS.





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